

WOVEN WORDS IN THE LINDISFARNE GOSPELS

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the meanings and function of the five ornamental pages that decorate the Lindisfarne Gospels (London, British Library, Cotton Nero D.IV), a Gospel book produced in the British Isles, most likely in the Isle of Lindisfarne, around 720 CE. Along with the ornament, the manuscript is embellished with portraits of the Evangelists and display scripts. Since the publication of a facsimile edition in 1960, the manuscript has been widely studied. A vast bibliography has explored the meanings of the miniatures, analyzing the ornament within the early medieval pictorial tradition of the Mediterranean basin. The present research relies on these studies, and takes a slightly different perspective by examining the ways that the ornamental pages work within the book itself. Interpreting each carpet page in light of the preceding portrait and the following text, it explores the ways in which the written and figurative languages share means of construction with the ornamental pages and enhance their metamorphic nature. The carpet pages transform the geometric shapes into crosses, they blur the positive and the negative spaces, they reveal and hide crosses and geometric shapes. This dissertation interprets the ornament not so much as a static image, but rather as a composition in motion that exists in tension between figurative and abstract, between mimicked materials and pure signs. The fluid and transformative character of the carpet pages prompts the beholder to assume an interpretative role, discerning new patterns and shapes each time he looks at the ornament. As a whole, the dissertation demonstrates that ornament is a progressive element. The carpet pages activate the beholder's senses and the paradoxes of perception: they mimic textiles and enamels that cannot be touched; they show crosses and forms that disappear in the background; the intricacy of the carpet pages makes the viewer's eyes wander within the pictorial composition and act on its

meanings each time the viewer looks at it. The obscurity of the carpet pages provides an obstacle even to the most educated eyes, and by hiding more than revealing the Word, it enegages with the nature of an invisible divine.

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Introduction

The Ornament's Fluidity

This dissertation takes as its main focus the ornamental pages of a much discussed manuscript, the eighth-century Lindisfarne Gospels preserved in the British Library in London with the shelfmark Cotton Nero D.IV. The book is embellished with Evangelist portraits (fols. 25v, 93v, 137v, 209v, figs. 1–4), five carpet pages (fols. 2v, 26v, 94v, 138v, 210v, figs. 5–9), display scripts that open the text of each one of the Gospels, and decorated initials throughout. The first carpet page prefaces Jerome's *Plures fuisse*, while the other four are sandwiched between the Evangelist portraits and the respective Gospels. The figures, ornament, and script appear on separate—although consecutive—pages; and following the organization of the codex itself, the 1960 facsimile edition of the Lindisfarne Gospels organized the examination of the codex into separate sections on the paleography, portraits, and carpet pages.¹ Since then, the monographs on this Gospel book have adopted a similar structure.² Keeping the discussion of each page independent from that of the others, scholars have stressed the visual connection of each of the illuminations with works of art produced in the Mediterranean basin, but they have not examined in depth the visual relationships that the miniatures establish with each other and with the text. The manuscript, however,

¹ The Matthew portrait is on folio 25v, followed by a blank page of parchment on folio 26r. Folios 26v and 27r display the Matthew carpet page and the Matthew display script respectively. The illuminations of the other Gospels follow the same arrangement showing the Evangelist portrait followed by the ornamental page and the decorated incipit of the Gospel. The scholarship on the Lindisfarne Gospels is highly indebted to the study by Thomas D. Kendrick et al., *Evangeliorum Quattuor Codex Lindisfarnensis* (Olten; Lausanne: Urs Graf, 1960).

² Janet Backhouse, *The Lindisfarne Gospels* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981); Michelle Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society, Spirituality and the Scribe* (London: British Library, 2003); eadem, *The Lindisfarne Gospels and the Early Medieval World* (London: British Library, 2011); Richard Gameson, *From Holy Island to Durham. The Contexts and Meanings of the Lindisfarne Gospels*. Published in conjunction with the exhibition *Lindisfarne Gospels Durham: One Amazing Book, One Incredible Journey*, Durham, 1 July–30 September 2013 (London: Third Millennium Publishing, 2013).

prompts the beholder to read words and images as a whole. It is the task of this dissertation to show the link between the carpet pages and the rest of the codex, relying on the fact that the repetition of geometrical shapes and patterns throughout the entire codex resists the idea that the illuminated pages and the script should be treated as discrete entities.

The treatment of the figures, ornament, and script in the independent sections generally found in the publications is a telling example of a wider scholarly tendency to separate the role of the miniatures from the function of the letters. Laura Kendrick has called for unity of figuration and writing and has warned scholars that the interpretation of the figuration of writing as a superficial complement to the script does not allow the beholder to recognize the transformative power of the images.³ In 2009, Benjamin Tilghman's dissertation on the Book of Kells paid attention to the risks of such separation especially in the study of Insular manuscripts, in which letters and paintings are mingled together.⁴ And recently, Jeffrey Hamburger and Cynthia Hahn have underlined the ways in which letters' iconic charge point to the transformative nature of a script that appears as image.⁵ Relying on these important studies, it is the goal of this thesis to highlight how the Insular ornamental pages refer to the process of metamorphosis of one language into another, turning letters into material images and material images into pure geometry.

Ornament is a topic that has increasingly attracted scholarly attention in the past few decades. In the last thirty years, it has become a subject no longer relegated

³ Laura Kendrick, *Animating the Letter. The Figurative Embodiment of Writing from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 5.

⁴ Benjamin C. Tilghman, "The Symbolic Use of Ornament and Calligraphy in the Book of Kells and Insular Art," (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2009).

⁵ Cynthia Hahn, "Letter and Spirit: The Power of the Letter, the Enlivenment of the Word in Medieval Art," in *Visible Writings. Cultures, Forms, Readings*, ed. Marija Dalbello and Mary Shaw (New Brunswick; London: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 55-76; Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *Script as Image* (Paris; Leuven: Peeters, 2014).

to the margin, but central to the study of the medieval art. In the texts of Ernst Gombrich, Oleg Grabar, Jean-Claude Bonne, James Trilling, Emmanuelle Pirotte, and Benjamin Tilghman, along with Martina Bagnoli's study of the ornament in the frescoes in the crypt of Anagni, ornament's function has shifted from that of the superficial embellishment, like a frieze added to an architecture, to an integral part of the work of art.⁶ In the case of the carpet pages, the layout of the designs clearly defines the centrality of the subject because the abstract patterns cover entire pages of the manuscript, rejecting the idea of marginal ornament.

The present study does not offer comprehensive theories of the role of the ornament in the Lindisfarne Gospels. It examines the fluid status of the carpet pages and the ways in which the ornament extends its function outside its own frame, affecting the understanding of the text and the figures that appear next to it.

The Structure of the Study

This dissertation is organized in two sections. The first two chapters discuss each the Evangelist portraits and their geometrical construction. The last two chapters follow a similar structure, presenting a visual analysis of each one of the carpet pages with a conclusive examination of the layout of the ornamental pages altogether. This arrangement of the chapters highlights the ways the figurative and the aniconic

⁶ Ernst Gombrich, *The Sense of Order. A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979); Grabar, *Mediation of Ornament*; Jean-Claude Bonne, "De l'Ornemental dans l'Art Médiéval (VII-XII Siècle): le Modèle Insulaire," in *L'Image. Fonctions et Usages des Images dans l'Occident Médiéval*, ed. Jerome Baschet and Jean-Claude Schmitt (Paris: Le Léopard d'Or, 1997), 207-49; Emmanuelle Pirotte, "Hidden Order, Order Revealed: New Light on Carpet Pages," in *Pattern and Purpose in Insular Art*, ed. Mark Redknapp et al. (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2001), 203-207; James Trilling, *The Language of Ornament* (London: Thames & Houston, 2001); Martina Bagnoli, "'Ut Domus Tali Ornetur Decore': Metamorphosis of Roman Ornamental Motifs in the Crypt of the Duomo of Anagni," in *Roma Felix. Formation and Reflections of Medieval Rome*, ed. Éamonn Ó Carragáin and Carol Neuman de Vagvar (London: Ashgate, 2008), 207-33; Tilghman, "Symbolic Use," 25-123.

embellishment of the manuscript share certain means of constructing the pictorial space.

Chapter 1 interprets the Matthew portrait as a key to the miniatures that follow, including the portraits of the Evangelists along with the carpet pages. In the Matthew portrait, the man that emerges from the curtain has been usually described as a peeping figure. A close examination of the painting reveals that what is hiding behind the textile is not the whole body of a man: the figure has no legs and no torso; the open veil discloses only a face. One might wonder why a face of ambiguous identity appears in this way. Answers to this question are provided in the consideration of the exegetical context of the appearance of the face of the Divine in the early medieval thought, particularly in the British Isles.

The first chapter reaches the conclusion that the Evangelist portraits engage with the impossibility of representing the Word made flesh. Chapter 2 builds on this argument and explores the ways in which the geometrical constructions of the Evangelist portraits convey insights into the function of pictorial arts as physical means for the invisible.

Chapter 3 turns its attention to the carpet pages and highlights the visual ambiguities that govern the design of the ornament. Blurring layers and fictive materials make the beholder's reading of the carpet pages an engaging but also a puzzling experience. These pictorial effects are presented in the context of the exegesis on the Gospels, in particular in light of the Augustinian and Insular understanding of the Gospels as mysterious texts.⁷ The connection between the Evangelist portraits and the ornamental pages becomes clear in this chapter, and it is

⁷ Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. Klaus-Detlef Daur and Joseph Martin, *CCSL* 32 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992); ed. and trans. Richard P.H. Green (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

emphasized in Chapter 4, which interprets the textile imagery exposed in the carpet page in light of the open curtain featured in the Matthew portrait. The ornament engages with the act of weaving, the cutting of the veil, and the sewing with threads as metaphors for the intellectual and exegetical activities that lead to the spiritual understanding of the Word of the Gospels.

This dissertation is concerned with demonstrating that the visual paradoxes discernible in the carpet pages are not the result of a pictorial mistake, as if the illuminator was not able to render flat surfaces or three-dimensional objects. On the contrary, the transformative nature of the ornament belonged to the maker's original intention charging the ornament with the function of acting on the beholder's mind and enhancing his desire of knowledge for the divine.

Method and Primary Sources

As embellishments of the Gospel narrative, the carpet pages evoke the Word made flesh in the very act of transformation from the letters to the physical reality of an incarnate God. The ornament reduces the distinction between the written language and the pictorial arts to the point where words and adornment blend to form a single material entity. Evoking the use of letters in their figurative aspect in the manner typical of the visual poems, the ornament refers to the critical study of the language as known in the eighth century by means of the tradition of the liberal arts. This is why such scholars as Friedrich Ohly who has treated the words as things have been important sources of inspiration in this study.⁸ In line with Ohly's reflections on the

⁸ Friedrich Ohly, *Sensus Spiritualis: Studies in Medieval Significs and the Philology of Culture*, ed. Samuel P. Jaffe, trans. Kenneth J. Northcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); for the impact on the visual arts, see Aden Kumler and Christopher Lakey, "Res et Significatio: The Material Sense of Things in the Middle Ages," *Gesta* 51/1 (2012): 1-17; on the use of words as material objects and its social implication, see Bruno Latour, "The Berlin Key or How to Do Words with Things," in

spiritual sense of writing, the Christian Word and the material thing (*res*) cannot be divided from one another because the pre-existent *Logos* took the shape of a man. In *Spiritual Seeing* and many other publications, Herbert L. Kessler has argued that reading images is an instrument of knowledge that can engage with the divine by stimulating the mind with processes of revealing, hiding, copying images, and making materials take the form of works of art.⁹ This dissertation takes his teaching as inspiration and leading method, and explores the Insular ornamental pages in light of the paradox of an Incarnate God whose image exists in a world that Christians cannot unlock in the present.

For biblical citations I have used the Douay-Rheims translation of the Vulgate. A few Latin texts that I have included in this thesis do not yet have English translations. The translations of passages excerpted from these texts are mine, including the *Commentary on the Pentateuch* originally attributed to Bede and then considered spurious; this is a text that has important implications for the illuminations of the Lindisfarne Gospels, and I believe it needs further study.¹⁰

Matter, Materiality, and Modern Culture, ed. Paul M. Graves-Brown (London: Routledge, 2000), 10-21.

⁹ See for example Herbert L. Kessler, "'*Facies Bibliothecae Revelata*:' Carolingian Art as Spiritual Seeing," in *Testo e Immagine nell'Alto Medioevo* Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo 41 (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1994), 533-84; idem, *Spiritual Seeing. Picturing God's Invisibility in Medieval Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); idem, "Corporeal Texts, Spiritual Paintings, and the Mind's Eye," in *Reading Images and Texts: Medieval Images and Texts as Forms of Communications; Papers From the Third Utrecht Symposium on Medieval Literacy, Utrecht, 7-9 December 2000*, ed. Mariëlle Hageman and Marco Mostert (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 9-61; idem, "'*Hoc Visibile Imaginatum Figuratur Illud Invisibile Verum*:' Imaging God in Pictures of Christ," in *Seeing the Invisible in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages; Papers From "Verbal and Pictorial Representations of the Invisible 400 to 1000," Utrecht, 11-13 December 2003*, ed. Giselle De Nie, Karl F. Morrison, and Marco Mostert (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005): 291-325; idem, "Image and Object: Christ's Dual Nature and the Crisis of Early Medieval Art," in *The Long Morning of Medieval Europe: New Directions in Early Medieval Studies*, ed. Jennifer R. Davis and Michael McCormick (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008): 290-319.

¹⁰ Michael Gorman, "The Commentary on the Pentateuch Attributed to Bede in PL 91.189-394," *Revue Bénédictine* 106,1-2 (1996) 61-108; 106, 3-4 (1996): 255-307, and text in Pseudo-Bede, *In Pentateuchum Commentarii*, PL 91:189D-349C.

The Manuscript's Original Setting

Although the Lindisfarne Gospels contains a colophon that lists the names of the makers of the codex, nothing is known about the original dating, localization, and authorship of the manuscript. The Old English colophon carefully describes the makers of the manuscript: Eadfrith, bishop of the Lindisfarne monastery wrote the book, Aethelwald, bishop of the isle of Lindisfarne, impressed it on the outside and made the binding. And Billfrith, the anchorite, forged the ornaments and adorned the binding with gold, gems and metal.¹¹ The later hand of the colophon along with its content led Elias A. Lowe, Richard Gameson, and Lawrence Nees to assert that the text was a tenth-century addition, written and signed by Aldred, provost of Chester-le-Street in 970.¹²

On the basis of Aldred's colophon, there has been scholarly agreement about the attribution of the manuscript to Eadfrith, who was bishop from 698 to 721. The

¹¹ On folio 89v, in the margin: "Thou Living God, remember Eadfrith and Aethelwald and Billfrith and Aldred, a sinner; these four, with God, were concerned with this book." On folio 259r, beneath the end of the Gospel of John, in the right column: "The three and one God established this Gospel before time, + Matthew wrote from the mouth of Christ; + Mark wrote from the mouth of Peter; + Luke wrote from the mouth of Paul; + John then in his prologue brought [belched] forth the word, and, God and the Holy Spirit giving, wrote." On folio 259r: "+ Eadfrith, bishop of the Lindisfarne church, originally wrote this book, for God and for St. Cuthbert and jointly for all the saints whose relics are in the island. And Aethelwald, bishop of the Lindisfarne-islanders, impressed it on the outside and covered it as he well knew how to do. And Billfrith, the anchorite, forged the ornaments which are on it on the outside and adorned it with gold and with gems and also with gilded-over silver, pure metal. And Aldred, unworthy and most miserable priest, glossed it in English with the help of God and St. Cuthbert. And, by means of the three sections, he made a home for himself; the section of Matthew was for God and St. Cuthbert, the section of Mark for the bishop, the section of Luke for the members of the community [in addition, eight ores of silver for his induction], and the section of St. John was for himself [in addition, four ores of silver for God and St. Cuthbert] so that, through the grace of God, he may gain acceptance into Heaven, happiness and peace, and through the merits of St. Cuthbert, advancement and honor, wisdom and sagacity on Earth, + Eadfrith, Aethelwald, Billfrith, Aldred made or, as the case may be, embellished this Gospel-book for God and Cuthbert." On folio 259v, in the margin: "+ May the letter [sc. the gloss?], faithful servant of speech, reveal me [sc. St. John's Gospel or, better, the whole Latin text?]; greet, O kindly [book], all my [sc. the writer's] brothers with thy voice." "I am called Aldred, born of [son of] Alfred; I speak as the distinguished son of a good woman." Trans. in Lawrence Nees, "Reading Aldred's Colophon for the Lindisfarne Gospels," *Speculum* 78 (2003): 333-77, at 340-41.

¹² Elias A. Lowe, "A Key to Bede's Scriptorium: Some Observations on the Leningrad Manuscript of the '*Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*,'" *Scriptorium* 12 (1958), 182-90, at p. 182; Richard Gameson, "Why Did Eadfrith Write the Lindisfarne Gospels?" in *Belief and Culture in the Middle Ages: Studies Presented to Henry Mayr-Harting*, ed. Richard Gameson and Henrietta Leyser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 45-58; for the discussion of previous scholarship and the colophon and its historical context, see Nees, "Reading Aldred's Colophon," 333-77.

date is often narrowed to circa 698, the date of St. Cuthbert's translation as well as of Eadfrith's assumption of the episcopacy. Nees clarified the colophon's attestation of the preservation of the codex in the St. Cuthbert community of Chester-le-Street in the tenth century. Without the evidence of Aldred's colophon, however, the hypothesis that Eadfrith wrote the original codex is plausible, but no more certain than that. On the other hand, there is no real argument against the making of the manuscript in eighth-century Lindisfarne. The Northumbrian pictorial tradition includes works of art that display a style comparable to that of the Evangelist portraits. Ernst Kitzinger pointed out that the geometrical features of the Evangelist symbols incised on the lid of the coffin of St. Cuthbert (Durham Cathedral, fig. 10) are comparable to the features of the Evangelists in the Lindisfarne Gospels.¹³ More important, the pictorial motives and especially the main arguments that the Lindisfarne Gospels share with the Codex Amiatinus (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Amiatinus 1) work in support for the localization of the *de luxe* manuscript in Lindisfarne around the same time.¹⁴

The investigation of the colophon in search of dates and makers responsible for the making of the book provides neither a clear answer nor any relevant information about the manuscript itself. This is because the colophon was added apparently with goals different from establishing a specific date of creation of the book. Rather, one of Aldred's intention was to enhance the role of the manuscript within a community that preserved the Word as it was written and received from the Evangelists. In the colophon, Aldred created a tradition for the manuscript, praising the manufacture of the object and its precious materials. Along with the celebration of

¹³ Ernst Kitzinger, "The Coffin-Reliquary," in *The Relics of St. Cuthbert*, ed. Christopher F. Battiscombe (Oxford: University Press, 1956), 288-48, at 245-48.

¹⁴ On the date of the Codex Amiatinus, see Celia Chazelle, "Painting the Voice of God, Wearmouth-Jarrow, Rome, and the Tabernacle Miniature in the Codex Amiatinus," *Quintana* 8 (2009): 15-59.

the artistic creation of the codex, Aldred introduced Eadfrith as a follower of the Evangelists who wrote down the Word they heard. Matthew wrote the words he heard from the mouth of Christ; Mark from Peter; Luke from Paul; John brought forth the word given by God and the Holy Spirit. Then Eadfrith transmitted the Word with the use of ink, and finally Aldred “made home for himself” in the book by adding the interlinear Old English translation of almost the entire text contained in the manuscript.¹⁵ The colophon builds a historical tradition. It challenges any chronological constraint and points to a continuity of transmission of the Gospels, celebrating the manuscript as material embodiment of the Word.

The uncertainty about the date and place of the original book also extends to the manuscript’s use. There is no clear evidence about the codex’s function. The colophon attests to the fact that the book was considered an authentic witness of the Word of the Gospels, but there is no indication that suggests how the book was handled and preserved in the eighth century. It is highly probable that the Lindisfarne Gospels was not conceived for liturgical use. This is because the codex contains non-functional liturgical apparatus. At the beginning of each of the Gospels there is a list of readings (*capitula lectionum*) that presents the passages in the same order as they appear in the following Gospel.¹⁶ A list of feasts appears right after each of the readings. To provide liturgical indications, the feasts should indicate which passages from that particular Gospel should be read. In the Lindisfarne Gospels, the lists do not mark which readings the feast refer to, and, therefore, they cannot be used for

¹⁵ See note 13; the Lindisfarne Gospels was provided with an interlinear Anglo-Saxon gloss for almost all parts of the manuscript, not only for the four Gospel texts, but also for nearly all of the secondary textual material, such as the prefaces *Novum opus* and *Plures fuisse*, and the prefaces to the individual Gospels. Some of the lists of liturgical feast days preceding the different Gospels received no Anglo-Saxon gloss, but nearly all other Latin texts did.

¹⁶ Transcription of the *capitula lectionum* in the Lindisfarne Gospels in Karl Wilhelm Bouterwek, *Screadunga. Anglosaxonica Maximam Partem Inedita* (Elberfeld: S. Lucas, 1858).

liturgical purposes.¹⁷ It seems plausible that the manuscript was preserved as a sacred presence of the Word of the Gospels. A Gospel book of relatively large size and considerable weight, the manuscript would probably have been opened in certain occasions, but not frequently.¹⁸ The difference in the condition of the parchments suggests that the pages that bear the Evangelist portraits as well as the carpet pages and the facing display scripts are worn by use. Although it is impossible to determine whether the marks of use on the parchment of the illuminations are contemporary with the manuscript or are the result of a more recent use, the blank parchment is a strong evidence for the limited access to the codex. The difference in colors of the pictorial support in comparison with the text pages leads to the hypothesis that the interest of the original community that produced the manuscript, and those who came afterwards, was to look at the illuminations more than to read the text.

¹⁷ On the prefatory materials, the feasts and the *argumenta* there is a vast discussion in Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society*, 150-93; on the liturgical feasts: *ibid.*, 182-85.

¹⁸ The size of the manuscript is 365 x 275 mm, its weight is 5.21 kg. See Françoise Henry, "The Lindisfarne Gospels," review of *Evangeliorum Quattuor*, in *Antiquity* 37 (1963): 100-110 at 100.

Chapter 1

Behind the Curtain: The Paradox of a Face We Cannot See

Introduction: The Evangelist Portraits Make the Word Visible

The Lindisfarne Gospels, in a fashion quite common to medieval Gospel books, is embellished with portraits of the four authors.¹⁹ Paul Underwood, Herbert L. Kessler, Robert M. Walker and others long ago argued that certain images of the Evangelists conveyed theological meanings developed in patristic exegesis on the four Gospels.²⁰ Following this kind of inquiry, in an article on the Insular tradition of the Evangelists, Jennifer O'Reilly raised the question as to why the writers, instead of Christ or the apostles for example, are frequently depicted in Insular Gospel books.²¹ Although the question seems to have quite obvious answers at first, for the Evangelists introduce the texts they wrote, it opens up complex theories about the status of images and their perception. O'Reilly pointed out how pictures of the Evangelists might be invested with several meanings. By deriving not only their form but also their function from antique author portraits, they might display the idea of authorship or authenticity, or they might be seen as devotional icons.²² Moreover, the portraits engage with

¹⁹ The bibliography on the Lindisfarne Gospel is vast, see *Evangeliorum Quattuor Codex Lindisfarnensis*, ed. Thomas D. Kendrick et al. (Olten; Lausanne: Urs Graf, 1956-60); Michelle Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society, Spirituality and the Scribe* (London: British Library, 2003); idem, *The Lindisfarne Gospels and the Early Medieval World* (ibid, 2011); Richard Gameson, *From Holy Island to Durham. The Contexts and Meanings of the Lindisfarne Gospels* (London: Third Millennium Publishing, 2013).

²⁰ The most extensive study of the Evangelist portraits is still Albert Mathias Friend, "The Portraits of the Evangelists in Greek and Latin Manuscripts," *Art Studies* 5 (1927): 115-47, 7 (1929): 3-29; Paul Underwood, "The Fountain of Life in Manuscripts of the Gospels," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 5 (1950): 43-138; Kessler, *Bibles from Tours*, 36-58; Robert M. Walker, "Illustrations to the Prologues in the Gospel Manuscripts of the Carolingian Ada School," *Art Bulletin* (1948): 1-10.

²¹ Jennifer O'Reilly, "Patristic and Insular Traditions of the Evangelists: Exegesis and Iconography of the Four-Symbols Page," in *Le Isole Britanniche e Roma in Età Romanobarbarica*, ed. Anna Maria Luiselli Fadda and Éamonn Ó Carragáin (Rome: Herder, 1998), 49-94; see also Robert McNally, "The Evangelists in the Hiberno-Latin Tradition," in *Festschrift Bernhard Bischoff zu seinem 65. Geburtstag: dargebracht von Freunden, Kollegen und Schülern*, ed. Johanne Autenrieth and Franz Brunhölzl (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1971), 111-22.

²² O'Reilly, "Patristic and Insular Tradition," 1-2.

processes of seeing the Word, and in turn, can provide arguments about how pictorial arts represent the nature of the pre-existing *Logos*.²³ This chapter explores the ways in which each of the writers' portraits conveys the character of the related Gospel and how, together, they provide arguments about the soul's thirst and failure to see God. The next chapter will examine the portraits altogether, focusing on their pictorial construction. What has up until now been called a mistaken perspective will be reconsidered in light of Boethian and Cassiodoran mathematical theories to show that geometrical reasoning was used to display insights about the character and the role of material images.²⁴

The Matthew Portrait

Matthew opens the series of Evangelist portraits that introduces each Gospel (fol. 25v; fig. 1).²⁵ The Matthew page has the most accessible artistic models and literary sources, and it works as a key for understanding the meaning of the miniatures that follow. As in the other three portraits, the composition comprises the seated Evangelist with his symbol featured over his head. In comparison with the other portraits, however, an additional pictorial element enriches the illumination: the red veil on the right side of the folio from which emerges a bearded, gray-haired, haloed face.

²³ Jeffrey Hamburger, *St. John the Divine: The Deified Evangelist in Medieval Art and Theology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Herbert L. Kessler, "The Book as Icon," in *In the Beginning. Bibles Before the Year 1000*, ed. Michelle Brown (Washington: Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 2006), 77-103; idem, "The Word Made Flesh in Early Decorated Bibles," in *Picturing the Bible: The Early Christian Art*, ed. Jeffrey Spier (Fort Worth: Kimbell Art Museum, 2007), 141-68; Tilghman, "Symbolic Use"; Karin Krause, "Heilige Schrift im Bild. Spätantike Portraits der inspirierten Evangelisten als Spiegel eines neues Medienbewusstseins," in *Bild und Text im Mittelalter*, ed. Karin Krause and Barbara Schellewald (Cologne: Böhlau, 2011), 41-83.

²⁴ Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society*, 360.

²⁵ Ibid., 364-66; *Codex Lindisfarnensis*, 109.

Seated on a bench at the left of the folio, Matthew holds a stylus and an open codex, while his symbol—a winged man—appears from his halo playing a trumpet. An imaginary vertical axis at the center of the page separates Matthew from the head emerging from the red curtain. The pictorial composition suggests that the viewer should read the two men as facing each other, but the visual relationship is focused on a relatively empty space. Between the two figures, the name of the Evangelist Matthew is inscribed in two separate parts: “*Matt*” and “*heus*.” The word *heus*, which in Latin means “listen” or “you,” appears in the space dividing the two men, suggesting an invisible voice.²⁶ The challenge of representing the unseen Word is also reinforced by the layout of the entire folio, which emphasizes Matthew’s empty codex by placing it at the center of the composition. The book is open, and the Evangelist, bending his head and focusing his gaze on its parchment, exhorts the viewers to look at it. Nothing, however, is visible on the codex; there is no color or ink, just the flesh of the parchment, which is both the codex Matthew is holding and the manuscript at which the viewer is looking. The illuminator highlighted the effect of seeing nothing by creating a contrast between the empty book and the rest of the surface covered with the color pink. The possibility of seeing is rendered as a complex experience, made clear in the way the illuminator painted the eyes of the figures, of considerable size and looking in different directions. Most notably, the winged man points to the ability of seeing more than the human eyes might allow. His body is in profile, while his eye unnaturally looks at the beholder. The attention to what the figures or the viewers can see is a dominant, yet not fully explored, issue in the Matthew page that

²⁶ On speaking books, see Sandra Linden, “Das sprechende Buch. Fingierte Mündlichkeit in der Schrift,” in *Text – Bild – Schrift. Vermittlung von Information im Mittelalter*, ed. Andres Laubinger, Brunhilde Gedderth, and Claudia Dobrinski, *Mittelalterstudien* 14 (Munich: Fink, 2007), 83-100.

shows how the relationship between the figures, not just their identities, is the very focus of the meanings of the illumination.

The issue of what the figures can see is central to interpreting the relationship between Matthew and his symbol. The Lindisfarne illuminator represented the Evangelist as a scribe rather than, for example, the terrestrial symbol of the seventh-century Book of Durrow (Dublin, Trinity College, MS A. 4. 5. 57, fol. 21v; fig. 11), which depicts Matthew's symbol as a standing man.²⁷ The portrait of Matthew in the Lindisfarne Gospels unifies the iconography of the Evangelist as a writer with the practice of referring to the Evangelists by drawing or painting their symbols. At first sight, modern viewers tend to understand the symbols as identifiers of the authors; Insular manuscripts, however, charge the symbols with additional meanings, to such extent that they constitute, in certain instances, the books' sole pictorial decoration.²⁸ In the Lindisfarne Gospels, the winged man is labeled "*Imago hominis*," and the illumination shows how the symbol engages the Gospel's character because of its quality of image.²⁹ Jerome's *Plures fuisse*, part of the prefatory material of the Lindisfarne Gospels (fols. 5v–8r), interprets Ezekiel's vision (Ez 1:4–9) and makes

²⁷ On the Evangelist as scribe see Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society*, 349; idem, "Spreading the Word. The Book as Desert, the Scribe as Evangelist," in *In the Beginning: Bibles before the Year 1000*, ed. Michelle Brown (Washington: Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 2006), 184; Mark Vessey, "From *Cursus* to *Ductus*: Figures of Writing in Western Late Antiquity (Augustine, Jerome, Cassiodorus, Bede)," in *European Literary Careers: The Author from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. Patrick Cheney and Frederick A. de Armas (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press: 2002), 47–103; on the Book of Durrow see Jonathan Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts 6th to 9th century* (London: Harvey Miller, 1978), pp. 30–32, cat. no. 6; Bernard Meehan, *The Book of Durrow: A Medieval Masterpiece at Trinity College Dublin* (Dublin: Town House, 1996).

²⁸ Such is the case, for example, of the Lichfield Gospels (Cathedral Library, MS s.n.), featuring full-length winged symbols arranged in four compartments on folio 219, accompanied by Mark and Luke portraits on folios 142 and 218, respectively; see Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, pp. 48–50; and the ninth-century Book of Armagh (Dublin, Trinity College Library, MS 52), in which the four Evangelist symbols introduce the Gospel of Matthew on fol. 32v, and each of the symbols opens the Gospel of Mark (fol. 53v), Luke (fol. 68v), and John (fol. 90r); see Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, 76–77; on the role of the Evangelist symbols in Insular Gospel books, see Martin Werner, "The Four Evangelist Symbols in the Book of Durrow," *Gesta* 8 (1969), 3–17; O'Reilly, "Patristic and Insular Traditions," 49–84.

²⁹ Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society*, 364–65.

clear that the image or likeness of a man is the sign for Matthew's writing about Christ's origin as a man:

The first face of a man signifies Matthew, who began his narrative as though about a man: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Mt 1:1).³⁰

The Matthew page visually renders Jerome's comparison of the man with the Evangelist by featuring the winged man on the same vertical axis as Matthew, as if he were emerging from his body, but winged and higher in his position. He is rendered as a heavenly creature, whereas Matthew appears as a scribe engaged in human activities. More than simply paraphrasing Jerome's text, the painting explores issues about pictorial arts themselves, issues that Jerome did not, of course, treat in his commentary. The inscription "*Imago hominis*" exhorts viewers to reflect on the nature of the figure as an image of man. By showing the writer as a scribe with his image above him, the picture invites viewers to compare his human likeness with a typological figure—the winged man—through which viewers can simultaneously see references to the prophetic vision in the Old Testament and its fulfillment in the New.

The pictorial synthesis of allegorical passages or even diverse sacred texts was taken, in itself, as a mechanism of spiritual seeing.³¹ The winged man is featured with

³⁰ "Prima hominis facies Matheum significat qui quasi de homine exorsus est scribere: 'Liber generationis Iesu Christi filii David filii Abraham'"; Jerome, "Praefatio," in *Commentariorum in Matheum Libri IV*, ed. David Hurst and Marcus Adriaen CCSL 77 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969), p. 3, cols. 59-62; trans. Thomas Scheck, *Commentary on Matthew* (Washington: Catholic University Press, 2008), p. 55.

³¹ The concept of spiritual seeing has several meanings and involves different mechanisms of perception. The possibility of seeing the harmony between the Old and New Testament is one of those. See Bede, *Historia Abbatum*, bk. 1, ch. 9: "Imagines quoque ad ornandum monasterium ecclesiamque beati Pauli apostoli de concordia veteris et novi Testamenti summa ratione compositas exhibuit." (Pictures which were intended for the adornment of the monastery and the church of the blessed apostle Paul about the agreement of the Old and New Testaments, painted with the utmost skill), in *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, ed. and trans. Christopher Grock, and Ian N. Wood (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2013), p. 44, discussed by Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing*, 151; Kessler has demonstrated in several publications how the human elevation of the content of pictorial art to be seen in the spirit is engaged through materials, forms, and contents. For example, Kessler, "Corporeal"; idem, "Hoc Visible Imaginatum"; idem, "'Aliter enim Videtur Pictura, Aliter Videntur Litterae': Reading Medieval Pictures," in *Leggere e Scrivere nell'Alto Medioevo*, Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo 56 (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2012), 2:701-26; David

a frontal eye while his head is shown in profile, turned toward the trumpet on the right. The position implies that he can see beyond what bodily eyes can grasp, probably disclosing in his own image the spiritual eye that Jerome, for instance, described in his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew.³² Jerome clarified that Christ can be seen with one eye only, the inner eye, since the bodily eyes are blind before the divinity.³³ This interpretation of the winged man as representing the possibility of seeing spiritually is supported by the trumpet he plays. The musical attribute recalls the instrument mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 24:31), when Christ foretells the destruction of the Temple. At the appearance of the sign of the cross in heaven, Matthew wrote that the Son of Man will come in the clouds, and he will send his angels with a trumpet to gather his elect (Mt 24:24–31). In the picture, the trumpet touches the veil on the right of the folio, which brings to mind the veil of the Temple that will be destroyed as a sign of the coming of Christ in the future (Mt 24:1–3). The sounds of the trumpet can give power to the words in Scripture, simultaneously speaking of prophecies of the Old Testament, Christ's triumph over death, and the future resurrection of human bodies. Such commentators as Jerome and Bede expressed the promise of resurrection carried by the sound of the trumpet. They explained that the Apostle (1 Cor 15:52) and the Evangelist John (Rev 8:5) both wrote of this trumpet, but its sound of salvation was first played by Moses when asked by God to sound the silver trumpets, bringing all the multitudes together at the door of the Tabernacle (Num 10:2).³⁴ The symbol emerges from the body of the Evangelist

Ganz and Thomas Lentjes, *Ästhetik des Unsichtbaren: Bildtheorie und Bildgebrauch in der Vormoderne* (Berlin: Reimer, 2004).

³² Jerome, "Incipit Evangelium Secundum Matheum," in *Ordo Evangelicus*, PL 29, col. 565B; also Ambrose, *Commentarius in Cantica Canticorum*, ch. 4, PL 15, col. 109B: "Merito uno oculo videtur Christus, quia non videtur oculo carnali."

³³ Jerome, "Incipit Matheum," PL 29, col. 565B.

³⁴ Jerome, *In Matheum*, IV.24:30-31, CCSL 77, p. 230, cols. 561-570; Bede, *In Matthaei Evangelium Expositio*, IV.24:30-31, PL 92, cols. 104B-C: "'Et tunc apparebit signum Filii hominis in coelo.' Signum hic aut crucis intelligamus, ut videant Iudaei in quem compunxerunt, aut vexillum victoriae

Matthew, reinforcing the accord between the Old and New Testament by means of the harmony that the musical instrument evokes. With the trumpet, the symbol of Matthew plays the sounds of the Old and New Testament, underlying the concordances that reside in their narratives.³⁵ Karl F. Morrison has explored how Boethian philosophy investigated the significance of the word *personare* to show the power of music to express the concordance and unison of diverse sounds.³⁶

The Matthew symbol in the Lindisfarne Gospels at once reminds viewers of both the meeting at the Tabernacle and the ultimate gathering that Christians expect in heaven. The winged man informs them that God has already sent his promise of salvation to humans before the incarnation, but it is only with the birth of Christ told by Matthew that Christians can see the signs spiritually. Michelle Brown has

triumphantis. 'Et tunc plangent se omnes tribus terrae.' Illae, scilicet, quae, in terris genitae, honorem suum non intellexerunt, sed comparatae sunt jumentis insipientibus, et similes facti sunt illis. 'Et mittet angelos suos cum tuba,' et reliqua. De hac tuba loquitur Apostolus, quae sublimia divinae laudis resonet sacramenta."

³⁵ Karl F. Morrison, "'Know Thyself': Music in the Carolingian Renaissance," in *Committenti e Produzione Artistico-Letteraria nell'Alto Medioevo Occidentale*, Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo 39, pt. 1 (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1992): 369-480; idem, "Augustine's Project of Self-Knowing and the Paradoxes of Art: An Experiment in Biblical Hermeneutics," *Studia Patristica* 70 (2013): 159-84; Kessler, "*Facies Bibliothecae*," 533-84; idem, *Spiritual Seeing*, 185-86.

³⁶ "Ex diversis sonis unam quodam modo concinentiam personare" ([music] plays diverse sounds in unison): Boethius, *De Institutione Musica Libri Quinque*, ed. Gottfried Friedlein (1867; reprint Frankfurt am Main: Minerva, 1966), 1:10, p. 197; Morrison, "Know Thyself," 369-480; Kessler, "*Facies Bibliothecae*," 533-84; idem, *Spiritual Seeing*, 185-86. As Morrison has explained, later on in the Carolingian period, Hincmar of Reims and Paschasius Radpertus used the word *persona* for describing the process of self-knowledge in which knowing the self was synonymous with knowing one's measure. The human body as a whole could be represented as a little orchestra because of the consonance of its parts. Knowing the self in Carolingian thought became inseparable from music because human existence was tempered by the ideal of concord, meaning unison, not unity, see Morrison, "Know Thyself," 377-79. In the same period, the decoration of religious texts visually engaged with music referring to the concordance of different voices. The trumpet played by Matthew reappeared in Carolingian manuscripts containing the text of the Bible. Kessler has pointed out that such ninth-century Bibles as the Moutier Grandval Bible (London, British Library, Add MS 10546, fol. 449r) and the First Bible of Charles the Bald (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 1, fol. 415v) show the symbol of the Evangelist Matthew playing the trumpet to render the concordance between the prophets' voice and the words of the Gospels, see Kessler, "*Facies Bibliothecae Revelata*," 573-76; Dutton and Kessler, *Poetry and Paintings*, 64-68. and Ps. 46:6: "Ascendit Deus in iubilo. Et Dominus in voce tubae." The word *persona* is polysemic. It belongs to the musical and theatrical fields, but in the Medieval texts the principal meaning of the word was theological, referring to Christ's nature. Also, *persona* carries a social component pointing to the identity, the character and the social position of a person, see Monica Otter, "Vultus Adest (*The Face Helps*). Performance, Expressivity and Interiority," in *Rhetoric Beyond Words: Delight and Persuasion in the Arts of the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Carruthers (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 151-72.

described how the scribe and his symbol evoke Christ's human and divine nature, respectively.³⁷ By showing the Evangelist and the symbol, however, the composition develops arguments not only about Christ's dual nature but also about the spiritual understanding of Scripture as a way to approach Christ's ineffable substance.

The relevance of the Gospels in acquiring higher knowledge of the Word becomes clear when the scribe and his winged symbol are organized into a pictorial context that includes the narratives from the Hebrew Bible. Before the eighth century, the portrait of Matthew in the Lindisfarne Gospels finds the closest iconographical comparison in the Evangelist featured in the sixth-century mosaics in the Justinian basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna (fig. 12). Although it is not possible to know whether the illuminator had knowledge of the mosaics, the comparison between the Lindisfarne Matthew and the mosaics in Ravenna shows how they engage with arguments about Christians seeing spiritually the pre-existent *Logos*.³⁸ Like the portrait of Matthew in the Lindisfarne Gospels, the mosaic in the church's presbytery exalts the Evangelist's artistry on earth as well as the ethereal nature of the winged man. Matthew appears as a scribe in a mountainous landscape, holding a codex, and seated before his desk furnished with an ink pot and a stylus, while his symbol flies above him, occupying the cloudy sky. The Evangelist has at his disposal the scrolls of

³⁷ Michelle Brown, *The Book of Cerne: Prayer, Patronage and Power in Ninth-century England* (London: British Library; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 88-89; Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels and the Early Medieval World*, 114-17.

³⁸ The mosaics in the basilica of San Vitale were begun in 526 and completed by 547. The mosaics are distant in time and place from the manuscript. However, Cassiodorus bridges the temporal and geographical gap between the two works of art. The Cassiodoran presence in the Gospel book has been established. Scholars have even proposed that his portrait was a model for Matthew, as discussed in Chapter 2 in this dissertation. See Friedrich W. Deichmann, *Ravenna: Haptstadt der spätantiken Abendlandes*, Geschichte und Monumente 1 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1976), 45-230; Irina Andreescu-Treadgold, "The Mosaic Workshop at San Vitale," in *Mosaici a San Vitale e Altri Restauri: Il Restauro in Situ di Mosaici Parietali*, ed. Anna Maria Iannucci, Cesare Fiori, and Cetty Muscolino (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1992), 31-41; Patrizia Angiolini Martinelli ed. *La Basilica di San Vitale a Ravenna*, *Mirabilia Italiae* 6 (Modena: Panini, 1997); Joachim Poeschke, "San Vitale," in *Italian Mosaics 300-1300* (New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 2010), 160-77.

the Law, because his Gospel contains Christ's genealogy and continues the narrative of the Old Testament. Matthew's long gray hair and beard seem to refer to the antique origin of his Gospel's narrative, as he assumes the physical features of the figures of the Hebrew Bible—Abraham, Melchizedek, Jeremiah, and Isaiah—in the same mosaic decoration (figs. 13 and 14).

In the context of emphasizing Christ's fulfilling the Old Testament, the mosaics interpret the Evangelists as new prophets, since they are represented with the prophets' gray beards and placed right above them. Showing Jeremiah and Isaiah, for instance, with the same features and white robes of the Evangelists makes the argument that both Christians and Jews have received the Word. Jerome explained that certain prophets like Isaiah who best understood the word of God could be identified with the Evangelists.³⁹ The mosaics in Ravenna compare prophets and Evangelists because they all share clothing and physiognomy; the mosaics also make clear that for the Evangelists and the prophets the interpretation of the signs relies on different abilities to see God because, before the incarnation, no material body could reveal to people the human features of the Word made flesh. Melchizedek, Abel, and Moses in the lunettes handle such signs as the bread and the lamb. Their eyes are lifted up to the sky above them, but what they see is a visual sign of the divine voice, the hand of God. They have bread and lamb, but no access to the image of the enthroned Christ in the apse (fig. 15).

Gold crosses in axis with the altars of Abraham and Melchizedek corroborate the connection between the Jewish offerings and the physical celebration of the

³⁹ Jerome, "Prologus," in *Commentariorum in Esaiam*, Pars I, Opera Exegetica 2, ed. Marcus Adriaen CCSL 73 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1963), p. 1; Cassiodorus maintained the belief that Isaiah should be called Evangelist, see Cassiodorus, "De Prophetis," in *De Institutione Divinarum Litterarum*, ch. 3, PL 70, col. 1114B: "Nam Isaiam, qui aperte referendo Christi Ecclesiaeque mysteria, non tam propheta quam evangelista dicendus est."

Eucharist in the church. The altars featured at the center of both the lunettes appear directly above the material altar of the church, thus linking the pictorial decoration with the liturgical rites. The Old Testament figures in the lunettes are included in the liturgy of the mass.⁴⁰ During the celebration of the Eucharist, the prayer in remembrance of Christ's passion, resurrection, and ascension asks the Lord to accept the gifts presented by his servant Abel, the patriarch Abraham, and the high priest Melchizedek. They all are pictured in the mosaics while offering their gifts. The mosaics represent Jewish offerings but exhort the viewers' minds to see Christ's incarnation. The Law is replaced and fulfilled by Christ. The process itself, according to the fifth-century bishop of Ravenna Peter Chrysologus, is an inspiration for understanding the meanings of the Scripture because, when the Gospels and the Old Testament are harmonious, they stimulate the soul's spiritual intelligence.⁴¹

The process of abstraction from the physical presence of Matthew toward the heavenly status of his sign above him would have been the viewer's experience upon looking at the Matthew page. The viewer's eyes move from Matthew's body up toward his symbol, allowing the beholder to realize that, because the Gospel is the fulfillment of the Old Testament, Christians can see the spiritual sense of Scripture. The comparison between the mosaics in Ravenna and the Matthew portrait in the Lindisfarne Gospels supports the interpretation of the Evangelist as being featured in a fashion that recalls the Old Testament. As scholars have often pointed out, certain of

⁴⁰ "Be pleased to look upon these offerings with a gracious and favorable countenance, accept them even as you were pleased to accept the offerings of your just servant Abel, the sacrifice of Abraham, our patriarch and that of Melchizedek, your high priest—a holy sacrifice, a spotless victim." Pius Parsch, *The Liturgy of the Mass* (London: St. Louis Herder, 1961), 240-41.

⁴¹ Peter Chrysologus, "De Lege Abrogata per Gratiam," in *Sermones*, Sermon 115, *PL* 52, cols. 515B-C: "Posteaquam Davidicam citharam spiritualis intelligentiae plectro et modulatione tangentes, animos vestros et corda permulsumus, intonantis quoque Evangelii ad suscitandos sensus vestros principia metuenda praeuimus, ad Apostolicum magisterium mox credidimus esse remeandum, ut tripartitus ordo sermonis ecclesiasticae doctrinae salutiferam teneat et praebeat disciplinam. Nam et cantilena a continuo labore relaxat animos, et Evangelica auctoritas mentis reparat et exsuscitat ad laborem, apostolicus vigor a tramite recto removeri et nostros non sinit sensus evagari."

Matthew's features are also to be seen in the Ezra portrait in the eighth-century Codex Amiatinus (fol. 5r, fig. 16), produced at the scriptorium of Wearmouth-Jarrow near Lindisfarne: shown in profile, seated on a bench with one hand holding the codex in which he is writing and the other hand holding a stylus.⁴² Although the strong visual link between Ezra in the Codex Amiatinus and the Evangelist Matthew in the Lindisfarne Gospels has led scholars to speculate about the possibility of a shared or direct model, it is safe to think that, whether or not the portrait of Ezra was available to the illuminator, the relationship between the high priest and the Evangelist Matthew was perceived as meaningful, especially given that the two manuscripts were produced at about the same time by two *scriptoria* in contact with each other.⁴³ Bede recognized Ezra as the scribe and editor of the books of the Old Testament and praised his effort in collecting different authors so distant in time and bringing their texts together in a single book.⁴⁴ The nine codices displayed in the bookcase behind the Ezra portrait isolate and give relevance to the one codex the high priest is holding and writing. The Codex Amiatinus itself embodies the idea of unity of the Scripture in its own physical body, as it contains the full Bible. O'Reilly has analyzed this unity of Scripture to understand the relationship between the Old and the New Testament it

⁴² Karen Corsano, "The First Quire of the Codex Amiatinus and the *Institutiones* of Cassiodorus," *Scriptorium* 41 (1987): 3-34; Richard Mardsen, "Job in His Place: The Ezra Miniature in the Codex Amiatinus," *Scriptorium* 49/1 (1995): 3-15; Paul Meyvaert, "Bede, Cassiodorus, and the Codex Amiatinus," *Speculum* 71 (1996): 827-83; Jennifer O'Reilly, "The Library of Scripture: Views from the Vivarium and Wearmouth-Jarrow," in *New Offerings, Ancient Treasures: Essays in Medieval Art for George Henderson*, ed. Paul Binski and William Noel (Stroud: Sutton, 2001), 3-39; Scott DeGregorio, "Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam* and the Reform of the Northumbrian Church," *Speculum* 79/1 (2004): 1-25; Paul Meyvaert, "The Date of Bede's *In Ezram* and His Image of Ezra in the Codex Amiatinus," *Speculum* 80/4 (2005): 1087-1133; Catherine E. Karkov, *The Art of Anglo-Saxon England* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2011), 38-41.

⁴³ Bruce-Mitford noticed that underneath both the bench and the tunic of Ezra are still visible the red lines of the preparatory drawings. These lines correspond to the respective objects in the Matthew portrait. This evidence supports the hypothesis of a common model, see *Codex Lindisfarnensis*, 146-47; O'Reilly, "The Library of Scripture"; the critical questions that the common Cassiodoran model arises is discussed in Chapter 2 in this dissertation.

⁴⁴ Bede, "Praefatio Prima," in *De Psalmorum Libro Exegesis*, PL 93, col. 478B: "Esdra enim, ut antiqui traditores ferunt, incompósitos eos, et pro auctorum ac temporum diversitate dispersos, in volumen unum collegit et retulit."

implies. She considered the *armarium* in the Ezra portrait in comparison with such fifth-century bookcases as the one featured in the mosaics of the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna (fig. 17), as well as the seventh-century Ashburnham Pentateuch frontispiece (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS nouv. acq. lat. 2334, fol. 2r, fig. 18) showing the list of the books of Moses in a Torah shrine with crosses on the arch.⁴⁵ In light of these pictorial traditions, O'Reilly interpreted the bookcase in the portrait of Ezra as the Ark of the Covenant in which the ten commandments of the divine Law revealed to Moses have been placed. The Ark is filled with the Cassiodoran nine volumes of the Old and New Testament, whose titles are visible on the spines of the codices organized on the shelves.⁴⁶ The Amiatinus *armarium*, also surmounted by a cross, shows how the spiritual interpretation of the Old Testament reveals the New Testament contained in the Law, and opens the heavenly Tabernacle to the instructed soul. The comparison between the representation of the high priest and the figure of Matthew reinforces the assumption made by both portraits, that the Old Testament and the Gospels cannot be interpreted as separate texts, but as if the narrative of the Gospels contained the Word before the incarnation, and enriched it with spiritual meaning.

In portraying Matthew with features traditionally attributed to prophets, the frontispiece gives visual form to ideas discussed by Jerome. The illuminator painted the Evangelist in the guise of Abraham and visually echoed the triangular shape of Matthew's body with the triangular curtain, recalling Jerome's explanation of the

⁴⁵ O'Reilly, "The Library of Scripture," 7-8; on Galla Placidia see Pierre Courcelle, "Le Gril de Saint Maurent au Mausolée de Galla Placidia," *Cahiers Archéologiques* 3 (1948): 29-39; on the Ashburnham Pentateuch, see Joseph Sloane, "The Torah Shrine in the Ashburnham Pentateuch," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 25/1 (1934): 1-12; on the Christian allegories in the manuscript illumination see Dorothy Verkerk, *Early Medieval Illumination and the Ashburnham Pentateuch* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁴⁶ Octateuch, Kings, Prophets, Psalter, Solomon, Hagiographis, Gospels, Epistles of the Apostles, Acts of the Apostles together with the Apocalypse. See Meyavert, "The Date of Bede's *In Ezram*," 1114-15.

Matthean genealogy by means of textile imagery.⁴⁷ From bottom to top, the contiguous position of Matthew's body with the winged man could point to the role of Christ's incarnation in the process of approaching the knowledge of the divine. From bottom to top, viewers can see in sequence the Evangelist and the winged man, and realize that through Matthew's telling of the incarnation, the figures acquire higher abilities to see. Jerome stressed the link between the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew and its quotation from Isaiah, and explained:

"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ" (Mt 1:1). We read in Isaiah: "Who shall declare his genealogy?" (Is 53:8) Let us not therefore think that the Gospel is contrary to the prophet, so that what the one said was impossible to utter, the other is beginning to declare. For Isaiah was speaking of the genealogy of his divinity, whereas Matthew has spoken about the incarnation. But he began with fleshly matters, so that through the man we might begin to become acquainted with God. "Son of David, son of Abraham" (Mt 1:1). The order is inverted, but it was changed out of necessity. For if he had put Abraham first and David afterwards, he would have had to repeat Abraham to weave the sequence of the genealogy. Therefore, omitting mention of the rest, he declared [him to be] the son of these [men], because the promise concerning the Christ was made only to them: to Abraham when he said: "In your Seed, all the nations shall be blessed, which is Christ"; to David, [in these words]: "I will place one from the fruit of your body upon your throne."⁴⁸

Jerome's interpretation of Matthew's incipit emphasizes the role of Christ's incarnation in the process of acquiring the knowledge of God. The divinity was foretold by Isaiah, but with the Evangelist Matthew the hermeneutic process has been

⁴⁷ According to Jerome, the Evangelist recorded the narrative of Christ's human origin by weaving the genealogical series from Abraham to Christ. See Jerome, *In Matheum*, 1:1, CCSL 77, p. 7, cols. 8-10: "Si enim primum posuisset Abraham et postea David, rursum ei repetendus fuerat Abraham ut generationis series texeretur."

⁴⁸ Jerome, *In Matheum*, 1:1, CCSL 77, p. 7, cols. 1-14: "'Liber generationis Iesu Christi.' In Esaia legimus: 'Generationem eius quis enarrabit?' Non ergo putemus evangelium prophetae esse contrarium ut quod ille impossibile dixit effatu, hic narrare incipiat, quia ibi de generatione divinitatis, hic de incarnatione est dictum. A carnalibus autem coepit ut per hominem Deum discere incipiamus. 'Filii David filii Abraham.' Ordo praeposterus sed necessarie commutatus. Si enim primum posuisset Abraham et postea David, rursum ei repetendus fuerat Abraham ut generationis series texeretur. Ideo autem ceteris praetermissis horum filium nuncupavit quia ad hos tantum est facta de Christo repromissio, ad Abraham: 'In semine,' inquit, 'tuo benedicentur omnes gentes, quod est Christus,' ad David: 'De fructu ventris tui ponam super sedem tuam'"; trans. Scheck, *Commentary*, 59.

filled with flesh. Because of the flesh, and through the flesh, Christians approach Christ's divine nature.

The winged man's position above the head of the Evangelist Matthew evokes the attempt of reason to approach the spiritual knowledge of the ineffable God. The illuminator organized the iconography focusing on the head, the corporeal part of man that according to tradition was believed to elaborate spiritual knowledge. Cassiodorus and Bede, for instance, discussed where exactly in the body spiritual understanding was located.⁴⁹ Asking whether the seat of the soul should be the head or the heart, Cassiodorus summarized other theories, and argued with the majority of the exegetes that the shape of the head and its position in the upper part of the body were evidence of its connection with the rational order of heaven. The circular shape of the Evangelist's head, emphasized by the perfect circle of his halo, seems to point to the belief that the spherical shape of the head is inspired by the form of heaven.⁵⁰ The heavenly configuration of the head provides the immortal and rational soul with reason to make a worthy home for itself in the head, Cassiodorus explained.⁵¹ Bede explored further the origin of this theory in his commentary on the Pentateuch, writing that Adam is created in the likeness of God, and receives what is called the spiritual body, the spirit of immortality that man shares with the angels. God breaths into the face of Adam (Gn 2:7) because, as Bede wrote, the head is the spiritual part of man; the head is the first part of the body that grows, and in the head, man is able to

⁴⁹ Cassiodorus, "De Sede Animae," in *Magni Aurelii Cassiodori Senatoris Opera. Pars I. De Anima*, ed. James W. Halporn (Turnhout: Brepols, 1973) *CCSL* 96, ch. 10, cols. 5-14, p. 554; Pseudo-Bede, *In Pentateuchum Commentarii*, ch. 2, *PL* 91, col. 206.

⁵⁰ Also the Evangelists Mark, Luke, and John show circular heads.

⁵¹ Cassiodorus, "De Sede Animae," *CCSL* 96, ch. 10, cols. 5-14, p. 554: "Plurimi autem in capite insidere manifestant, si fas est cum reverentia tamen dicere, ad similitudinem aliquam Divinitatis, quae licet omnia ineffabili substantia sua repleat, Scriptura tamen coelos insidere confirmat. Dignum enim fuit ut arcem peteret quae se noverat caelesti operatione sublimem et tali loco prae caeteris versari unde reliqua membra debuissent competenti regimine gubernari. Nam et ipsa figura capitis sphaeroides pulcherrima est in qua sibi immortalis atque rationalis anima dignam faceret mansionem."

elaborate understanding, meanings, and senses.⁵² In the soul's ability to reason, man is created in the image of God (Gn 1:27).

The illuminator explored the issue of the soul's attempt to grasp the knowledge of the divinity, and especially the human limit of this rational effort, in the relationship between the curtain and the emerging head. Processes of covering and uncovering the face by means of the veil point in the picture, and in Scripture as well, to the unfulfilled desire to see the face of God.⁵³ By means of the veil, the illuminator focused on the role of the Gospels for the mind approaching the likeness of God. The textile renders visually the Gospels' narratives, weaving Christ's incarnation as a single piece of fabric and also evokes the textile metaphors contained in the New Testament to explain that Christ's body, a veil itself, opens the mind to spiritual knowledge.⁵⁴ The veil in the Matthew page reinforces the connection between textiles and Gospels, referring to a pictorial tradition that compares the Scripture to veils as expressed, for example, in the Evangelists of the eighth-century Stockholm Codex Aureus (Royal Library A.135, fols. 9v and 150v, figs. 19 and 20).⁵⁵ In this manuscript

⁵² The passage in Gn 2:7 writes: "Formavit igitur Dominus Deus hominem de limo terrae, et inspiravit in faciem ejus spiraculum vitae, et factus est homo in animam viventem."; Pseudo-Bede, *In Pentateuchum*, ch. 2, PL 91, cols. 206B-D: "Et in faciem illius idcirco inspirare Dominum dicunt, quia pars spiritalis est corporis caput, quod in hominibus primo nascitur, et principales habet sensus per divisiones in cerebro. Cuius prima pars, visum, auditum, gustum, odoratumque habet; secunda vero intellectum; tertia, tactum, qui per omne corpus effunditur. [...] Corpus vero filii a corpore patris trahit corpulentiam et vim occultam, hoc est peccati, ab anima vero immortalitatem et prudentiam."

⁵³ On the desire to see the face of God: Gn 32:30; Ex 33:11; Ps 41:3. Rev 22:4; the veil is removed in Christ: 2 Cor 13–18.

⁵⁴ The veil plays a key role in the Matthew page as well as in the ornament of the manuscript recalling textile motifs throughout. On the roles of the veil in pictorial arts Johann Konrad Eberlein, *Apparitio Regis-Revelatio Veritatis. Studien zur Darstellung des Vorhangs in der bildenden Kunst von der Spätantike bis zum Ende des Mittelalters* (Wiesbaden: L. Reichert, 1982); Herbert L. Kessler, "Through the Temple Veil. The Holy Image in Judaism and Christianity," *Kairos. Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft und Theologie* 32/33 (1990/1991): 53-77; idem, *Spiritual Seeing*; Klaus Krüger, *Das Bild als Schleier des Unsichtbaren: ästhetische Illusion in der Kunst der frühen Neuzeit in Italien* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2001); Gerhard Wolf, *Schleier und Spiegel. Traditionen des Christusbildes und die Bildkonzepte der Renaissance* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2002); Johannes Endres, Barbara Wittmann, and Gerhard Wolf eds. *Ikonomie des Zwischenraums. Der Scheiter als Medium und Metapher* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2005).

⁵⁵ On the veil as the incarnate *Logos* see Sebastian Brock, "Clothing Metaphor as a Means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition," in *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter*, ed. Margot Schmidt (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet 1982), 11-38; Maria

the portraits of the Evangelists Matthew and John are flanked by two curtains twisted around the columns. In the Matthew portrait, the illuminator made explicit the relationship between the curtains and the Old and the New Testament by pairing the textiles with the portraits featured in the clypei right above the two columns, holding a scroll and a codex, respectively. The circular shapes created by the curtains embracing the columns lead the eye to see the same circles in the medallions right above containing figural representations of the two Testaments. The illuminator of the portrait of Matthew in the Lindisfarne Gospels reduced the number of curtains from two to one and featured the head next to the curtain, as if it were emerging from the veil while holding a codex. The miniature in the Lindisfarne Gospels does not clearly separate the Old and the New Testament as they appear in the portrait of the Codex Aureus, rather, it focuses on the act itself of unveiling the codex, thus interpreting the textile in light of the biblical accounts that related the veil to Christ's body and eventually to the Gospels revealing the spiritual sense of the Scripture (2 Cor 13–15).

The illuminator of the Lindisfarne Gospels likened the veil to a body by placing the curtain right next to the head, where a figure should appear. The veil simultaneously works as a body and a textile that reveals the Scripture. The image evokes the claim in the Epistle to the Hebrews (10:19–20) that through his death on

Evangelatou, "The Purple Thread of Flesh: The Theological Connotations of a Narrative Iconographic Element in Byzantine Images of the Annunciation," in *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium: Studies Presented to Robin Cormack*, ed. Antony Eastmond and Liz James (Burlington: Ashgate, 2003), 261-79; Nicholas Constanas, "Weaving the Body of God: Proclus of Constantinople, the Theotokos, and the Loom of the Flesh," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3/2 (1995): 169-94; idem, *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003); on the arts in the British Isles, see Elizabeth Coatsworth, "Cloth-Making and the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Art," in *Medieval Art: Recent Perspectives. A Memorial Tribute to C.R. Dodwell*, ed. Gale R. Owen-Crocker and Timothy Graham (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 1998), 8-25; Lionel Wickham, "Symbols of the Incarnation in Cyril of Alexandria," in *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter. International Colloquium, Eichstätt 1981*, ed. Margot Schmidt (Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1982), 41-53; on the Codex Aureus see Richard Gameson, *The Codex Aureus. An Eighth-Century Gospel Book: Stockholm, Kungliga Bibliotek, A.135* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 2002); Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, pp. 56-57, cat. 30.

the cross, Christ abrogates the Jewish cult of blood sacrifices and, in so doing, opens up the Holy of Holies to all through his veil, that is his flesh.⁵⁶ The textile parallels the paradoxes of Christ's dual nature with the verses woven in Scripture, showing that by embodying Christ's flesh, the veil articulates the relationship between the Old and the New Testament. Origen saw a direct relationship between the veil of Christ's body and the textile metaphor for the Scripture, and explained:

For the Word came into the world by Mary, clad in flesh; the seeing was not understanding; all saw the flesh; knowledge of the divinity was given to a chosen few. So when the Word was shown to men through the lawgiver and the prophets, it was not shown them without suitable vesture. There it is covered by the veil of flesh, here of the letter. The letter appears as flesh; but the spiritual sense within is known as divinity. This is what we find in studying Leviticus... Blessed are the eyes which see divine spirit through the letter's veil.⁵⁷

Just as the human flesh of the Word of God veils his divinity from most eyes, so the underlying spiritual meaning of the Word of God as expressed in the New Testament is veiled by the literal sense of the Law and the prophets' words. The Bible envisions the relationship between the two testaments in terms of textiles because the material quality of the fabric simultaneously reveals and covers, thus evoking the paradox of an incarnate God. Christ's body is a veil that encloses his invisible divinity. In agreement with the unity of his divine and human nature the testaments are united in such a way that the veil of the Gospels uncovers what was already contained in the

⁵⁶ "Habentes itaque, fratres, fiduciam in introitu sanctorum in sanguine Christi, quam initiavit nobis viam novam, et viventem per velamen, id est, carnem suam."

⁵⁷ "Sicut in novissimis diebus Verbum Dei ex Maria carne vestitum processit in hunc mundum et aliud quidem erat, quod videbatur in eo, aliud, quod intelligebatur, carnis namque adspectus in eo patebat omnibus, paucis vero et electis dabatur divinitatis agnitio, ita et cum per prophetas vel legislatorem Verbum Dei profertur ad homines, non absque competentibus profertur indumentis. Nam sicut ibi carnis, ita hic litterae velamine tegitur, ut littera quidem adspiciatur tamquam caro, latens vero intrinsecus spiritualis sensus tamquam divinitatis sentiatur. Tale ergo est quod et nunc invenimus librum Levitici revolventes... sed beati sunt illi oculi, qui velamine litterae obtectum intrinsecus divinum Spiritum vident": Origen, "Origenes Secundum Translationem Quam Fecit Rufinus" in *Die Homilien zu Genesis, Exodus, und Leviticus*, ed. Erster Teil GCS 29 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1920); "Homily One," in *The Fathers of the Church. Origen. Homilies on Leviticus*, 1:1, trans. Gary Wayne Barkley (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), p. 29.

Old Testament. The curtain in the portrait of the Evangelist Matthew engages with both interpretations of the textiles presented in the Bible, the christological reading of the living veil and the hermeneutical one, meaning that the textile reveals the nature of the Word when the body of Christ takes away the veil that covers the Old Testament. In parallel with the facing composition, which features Matthew and his symbol seeing with the spiritual eyes, the open curtain evokes the ways in which the New Testament explained that Christ's incarnation unveiled the spiritual understanding of Scripture.⁵⁸

Interpreting the veil in the Matthew page as a reference to the spiritual sense of the Gospels poses several questions about the very nature of that veil and its relationship with the head emerging from it. I suggest that, because of its features and position next to the curtain, the head represents the Evangelist and thus engages with the theological issue of the unfulfilled human desire to meet God face to face. Previous scholarship has treated the head as part of a man hiding behind the curtain, but in the picture, the visage does not imply the presence of a body attached to it.⁵⁹ The curtain, cut at the bottom in a triangular shape, would have revealed legs and feet if a full figure were actually intended to be there. The face appears right next to the veil, at the point where a rope binds the fabric, giving the impression that the head with his book is actually emerging from behind, although no body is visible. Imagining pulling back the curtain, what the viewer sees is a face, not an entire human figure.

⁵⁸ Augustine, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*, PL 42, bk. 8, col. 239, and bk. 11, col. 243; Michel Aubineau, "La Tunique Sans Couture du Christ. Exégèse Patristique de Jean 19:23-24," in *Kyriakon: Festschrift Johannes Quasten*, ed. Patrick Granfield and Josef Jungmann (Münster in Westf.: Aschendorff, 1970), vol. 1, pp. 100-27.

⁵⁹ He is described as a man peering from behind the curtain; see Karkov, *The Art of Anglo-Saxon*, 36-37; Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society*, 361.

The difficulty of determining the identity of the visage in the Matthew page that troubles scholars might be, in the end, intentional. The face is so close to the veil that it is impossible to define whether the hair is long or short, because part of the head is covered by the red fabric. The face emerges from the curtain, inviting viewers to ask themselves who the person is, but the question is destined not to have a definite answer because the head both reveals and covers the subject's identity. The appearance of a face is a formula used throughout the Bible to express the paradox of knowing the invisible God by looking at him at the end of days.⁶⁰ The Book of Exodus presents the meeting between Moses and the Lord as a conversation between friends who meet "face to face" (Ex 33:11). The Lord, however, makes clear to Moses that no living soul can see God's face and survive (Ex 33:20).

Because of its iconographic uniqueness, the mysterious face has attracted much scholarly attention in the attempt to reveal his identity. Moses, Paul, Christ, and God the Father have all been suggested in comparison with Scriptural texts or such images as the miniature explicit to the entire Bible at the end of Revelation in the Moutier-Grandval Bible (fol. 449r, fig. 21).⁶¹ The general consensus identifies the face as a representation of Moses, based on both the closed book that the figure is holding and the curtain unveiling his visage. The closed codex stands in contrast to

⁶⁰ Gn 32:30: "And Jacob called the name of the place *Phanuel*, saying: I have seen God face to face, and my soul has been saved"; Ex 33:11: "And the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man is wont to speak to his friend"; Ps 41:3: "My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God?"

⁶¹ He is interpreted as a figure of inspiration in comparison with the muse in the Mark portrait of the Rossano Gospels (Rossano Calabro, Cathedral Library, s.n.), or the ivory depicting St. Peter dictating the Gospel to St. Mark (London, Victoria and Albert Museum, Inv. no. 270-1867), see *Codex Lindisfarnensis*, 161-4; he is either Moses or God the Father according to George Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells. The Insular Gospel-Books, 650-800* (New York: Tames & Hudson, 1987), 120-2; in addition to Moses, Brown advanced the interpretation of the man being every believer and a symbol of the Church, in *The Lindisfarne Gospels and the Medieval World*, 121; on the Moutier-Grandval Bible see Kessler, *Bibles from Tours*; Dutton and Kessler, *Poetry and Paintings*, 65.

Matthew's open one.⁶² William Diebold explained that closed and open books visually represent Paul's metaphors, which juxtapose the tablets of the Law received by Moses with Christ's Gospel.⁶³ Christ is a letter "written not in ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tablets of stone, but in the fleshy tablets of the heart" (2 Cor 3:3).⁶⁴ Paul also wrote of the veil that Moses puts over his face when he comes down from Sinai because he is glowing due to his contact with God.

It seems likely that the codex held by the emerging head represents the Old Testament because of the interpretation of the veil in the Second Letter to the Corinthians just mentioned. The Matthew page itself, however, suggests that the closed codex should be identified as a Gospel book. The winged man is holding a closed green codex in shape and color similar to the one emerging from the veil. In the other portrait miniatures, the lion, the calf, and the eagle, as well as the Evangelist Mark, each hold a green or red closed codex, providing reasons for interpreting the peeping figure's book as a Gospel book rather than the Law that Moses received on Mount Sinai.

The features of the face find the closest comparisons with the Evangelists of the Lindisfarne Gospels itself (fig. 22). The hair is curly like that of Mark, Luke, and John, but its color recalls the gray hair of the facing Matthew. The gray beard is the same color as Matthew's, but it is curly like Luke's beard. The facial contour, the

⁶² William Diebold, *Word and Image. An Introduction to Early Medieval Art* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), 39-40; on the veil of Moses, see Kessler, "Through the Temple Veil," 53-77; Kessler, "*Facies Bibliothecae*," 533-84; William Diebold, "Except I Shall See... I Will not Believe," (John 20:25). Typology, Theology, and Historiography in an Ottonian Ivory Diptych," in *Objects, Images and the Word: Art in the Service of the Liturgy*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton, N.J.: Index of Christian Art in association with Princeton University Press, 2003), 257-93; Herbert Broderick, "The Veil of Moses as Exegetical Image in the Illustrated Old English Hexateuch (London, B.L. Cotton Ms. Claudius B.iv)," in *Insular and Anglo-Saxon Art and Thought in the Early Medieval Period*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton: Index of Christian Art, Princeton University; University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011): 271-285.

⁶³ Diebold, *Word and Image*, 39-40.

⁶⁴ "Manifestati quod epistola estis Christi, ministrata a nobis, et scripta non atramento, sed Spiritu Dei vivi: non in tabulis lapideis, sed in tabulis cordis carnalibus."

semicircular lines that define the eyes' openings, the eyebrows, and the mouth, as well as the blue color of their eyes, closely associate the face with those of the Evangelists. At first sight, the viewer notices the resemblance between Matthew and the mirroring face. Considering the Evangelist portraits altogether, it becomes clear that the face recalls the physical characteristics of all the writers of Christ's life. In this vein, Bruce-Mitford, in his influential facsimile edition of the Lindisfarne Gospels, suggested by visual comparison that the face is drawn from the same models used for the Evangelists Mark, Luke, and John.⁶⁵ Bruce-Mitford's hypothesis provides technical reasons for the resemblance of these visages while discerning the different color and length of their hair and beard. The authors' portraits show either brown or gray, long or short hair, they are bearded or clean-shaven to render the quality of their texts, different in character while harmoniously speaking of the same divine source.

Medieval beholders might have perceived that the face and the portrait of Matthew share physical characteristics. In the eleventh century, the illuminator of a Gospel book probably produced at Canterbury (Copenhagen, Royal Library, G.K.S. 10, 2°, fol. 17v, fig. 23) looked at the Matthew page in the Lindisfarne Gospels and interpreted the pictorial source to create a new Matthew portrait.⁶⁶ Matthew's visage and the face emerging from the veil are both shown in a three-quarter view, allowing the viewer to realize that they look like each other. They both have elongated faces with narrow eyes, arched eyebrows, beard, and hair divided in the center, features also shared by Luke, the only other Evangelist portrait that the manuscript still retains. The physical resemblance of the Evangelists can be explained in both the Lindisfarne and

⁶⁵ Bruce-Mitford, *Codex Lindisfarnensis*, 146.

⁶⁶ On the relationship between the Copenhagen and the Lindisfarne Matthew see Carol Farr, "Style in Late Anglo-Saxon England: Questions of Learning and Intention," in *Anglo-Saxon Styles*, ed. Catherine E. Karkov and George Hardin Brown (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 118-120; see also Elzbieta Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts 900-1066* (London: Harvery Miller, 1976), vol. 2, p. 69, cat. no. 47; Brown, "In the Beginning," 20-24; idem, *The Lindisfarne Gospels*, 354-56.

Copenhagen Gospels in terms of transmission of models. Reducing the similarity to a technical process, however, does not, by itself, provide intellectual reasons for the relationship between the unveiled face and those of the Evangelists. Rather, there are exegetical reasons for the resemblance of the Evangelists and the face in the Lindisfarne Gospels, as well as the representation of the open curtain in the Matthew page.

Isidore and Bede, in their commentaries on Genesis and the Pentateuch respectively, asserted that the face of God was already revealed to the figures of the Old Testament, but they could not see it because a veil covered their eyes.⁶⁷ Only when the veil of the Old Testament was taken away, did a face become visible: not the face of God, rather his likeness as disclosed by the Gospels. Human comprehension of the divinity can only go as far as understanding spiritually the word of the Gospels, Isidore and Bede made clear, thereby revealing not the invisible face of God, but what Bede defined “the face of the Word of the Gospels.” Interweaving verses from the Pentateuch with others from the New Testament, Bede explained how the search for the visage of God could find comparisons in the Bible, when such men as Moses, Benjamin, and Paul found the savior although they were not completely aware that they were looking for him.⁶⁸ Bede maintained that Moses and the other

⁶⁷ Isidore of Seville, *Mysticorum Expositiones Sacramentorum seu Quaestiones in Vetus Testamentum. In Genesim*, PL 83; for Bede see Michael Gorman, “The Commentary on the Pentateuch Attributed to Bede in PL 91.189-394,” *Revue Bénédictine* 106,1-2 (1996) 61-108; 106, 3-4 (1996) 255-307, reprinted in *Biblical Commentaries from the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Michael Gorman (Florence: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2002), and text in Bede, *In Pentateuchum Commentarii*, PL 91, cols. 189-394; the attribution to Bede is not generally accepted, but the text was influential in the eighth-century Northumbria. Karen Corsano has noticed that passages of this text occur in the Pentateuch roundels in the Codex Amiatinus on folio 7v: “The First Quire,” 30-32.

⁶⁸ Pseudo-Bede, *In Pentateuchum*, especially ch. 42, PL 91, cols. 269B-C: “Dixit Jacob filiis suis: ‘Est frumentum in Aegypto.’ Dicit et Deus pater: ‘Ex Aegypto vocavi filium meum.’ Descenderunt igitur decem perfectiores, id est, de catalogo legis, id est, constituti in numero. Quos ipse cognoscens, non est agnitus ab illis. Cognoscuntur et Hebraei a Christo, ipsi non agnoscunt illum. Dederunt illi pecuniam; sed Joseph, id est, Christus, triticum dedit, et argentum reddit, quia non pecunia emitur Christus, sed gratia. Vidit Joseph Benjamin parvulum fratrem. Mystice quoque Dominus vidit Paulum, quando lux circumfulsit illum parvulum. Dicit quando. Nondum quando lapidantium Stephanum vestimenta servavit, perfectus erat. Flevit Joseph; et caecitas Pauli fletus est Christi. Lavit faciem Christus, cum

figures of the Old Testament could not recognize the savior while they adhered to the Law. Isidore and Bede further explained how the process of revealing God's hidden identity was formulated in terms of textiles. The spiritual sense was already in the Old Testament, but concealed within the carnal sense of letters. The concept was expressed by means of the veil to show that before the incarnation men were still blind because they understood the Scripture in its literal sense.

As illustrated in the Lindisfarne Gospels, the Word of the Gospels makes it possible for the face to emerge from the veil, engaging with the paradox of seeing a face, God's face, that the soul cannot grasp completely. Bede summed up the arguments just described in the following passage from his commentary on the Pentateuch:

The silver chalice (Gn 44:1–12) was put in the sack of the younger only, and found by Benjamin. Joseph's chalice was found in the sack, similarly the word of heavenly teaching already shone in Paul's body since he was instructed in the Law. Because he was still not subject to the justice of God, the chalice was within the sack, the teaching within the Law, the lamp within the bushel (Acts 9:12, 17). Nevertheless Ananias was sent to give a blessing and to lay on his hand and open the sack (Acts 9:18). When the sack was opened, the silver shone. When the sack is made free of its lace, and when the scales fall [Paul sees straightway], meaning that when the veil of the Law is taken away, [we] gain the freedom of grace, and the face of the Word of the Gospels is revealed.⁶⁹

The Matthew page offers the revelation of a hidden figure, whose facial features

baptizatus est Paulus, per quem Dominus Jesus a plurimis videretur"; Also Bede, "De Joseph," in *Quaestionum Super Genesim*, PL 93, col. 352C: "vidit Joseph Benjamin parvulum fratrem suum: mystice quoque vidit Jesus Paulum, quando lux circumfulsit eum"; Isidore of Seville, "De Historia. Joseph," in *Mysticorum Expositiones*, ch. 30, PL 83, cols. 271B-276C; Ambrose, *De Joseph Patriarcha Liber Unus*, PL 14, cols. 641-672C, trans. Michael McHugh in Bernard M. Peebles ed., *Saint Ambrose. Seven Exegetical Works*, The Fathers of the Church 65 (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1972), 189-237.

⁶⁹ "Dehinc scyphus argenteus soli sacculo junioris inseritur, qui inventus est in sacculo Benjamin. Scyphus Joseph, in corpore Pauli doctrinae coelestis prae fulgebat eloquium, dum esset eruditus in lege, quia subjectus non erat. Intra saccum erat scyphus, doctrina intra legem, lucerna intra modum. Missus tamen Ananias manum posuit, marsupium solvit: marsupio soluto, argentum resplenduit. Et dehiscentibus squamis, velut sacco quibusdam vinculis soluto, id est, deposito legis velamine, adeptus est gratiam libertatis, et revelata facie sermonis Evangelii praedicat": Pseudo-Bede, "Expositio in Primum Librum Moysis, qui Dicitur Herbaice Beresith, Graece autem Genesis," in *In Pentateuchum*, Bk. 1, ch. 42, PL 91, cols. 269C-D; Gorman, "Commentary on the Pentateuch," see also Ambrose, *De Joseph Patriarcha*, ch. 9, PL 14; trans. Michael P. McHugh in *Saint Ambrose*, 187-234, at 227-28.

remind viewers of their search for the face of God. The face represents the features of the Evangelists, reflecting what Bede calls the “face of the Word of the Gospels,” but it also implies the presence, although not their physical representation, of the figures in the Bible that look for the savior but find only a reflection of him.⁷⁰ Moses and Paul, the usual identities proposed for the emerging face, are implied in the illumination because of the movement of the veil, which is opened while partially covering the head.

Previous scholars have described some of the visual links among the Evangelist portraits, such as the winged man of Matthew and the lion of Mark both playing a trumpet; however, the mechanism itself of searching for similarities and differences among the authors’ portraits, remains unexplored. The visual links between the Matthew portrait and those of the other Evangelists make viewers aware that the miniatures need to be interpreted in relationship to each other in order to activate processes of spiritual understanding of Scripture. In this interpretative process, the portraits allow viewers to recognize the invisible unique source behind the Evangelists’ narratives.

The Mark Portrait

Mark sits facing left. He displays a book with one hand while holding a stylus with the other (fol. 93v, fig. 2).⁷¹ He is clean-shaven and dressed in a tunic and chlamys, a cloak pinned with a fibula at the right shoulder. While the Evangelist Matthew appears on the left side of the page, Mark is featured on the right side.

⁷⁰ On the concepts of hybrid iconography and transformation of identities see Jérôme Baschet, “Inventivité et Sérialité des Images Médiévales. Pour une Approche Iconographique Élargie,” in *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 51/1 (1996): 93-133, at 103-5; Jean Wirth, *L’Image Médiévale. Naissance et Développements (VI^e-XV^e Siècles)* (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1989), 16-17.

⁷¹ *Codex Lindisfarnensis*, 359-61.

Although the two portraits are placed at distance in the manuscript, when compared to each other, they look like the two Evangelists are engaged in a virtual dialogue. The fact that their pictorial compositions share such elements as the symbols playing trumpets, that are not to be found in the following portraits, suggests that the portraits of Matthew and Mark are to be read in relationship to each other. Bede presented the Evangelists Matthew and Mark in terms of harmonious conversation, as if they were responding to each other in the openings of their Gospels to demonstrate that Christ is both man and God.⁷²

The trumpet-sounding lion emerges from Mark's halo and plays the instrument in a fashion similar to Matthew's symbol; the winged man plays for Christ's incarnation, while the lion for his divinity. The lion recalls the first verses of the Gospel of Mark, in which the Evangelist used the image of the lion playing in the desert to refer to John the Baptist:

The beginning of the Gospels of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way." The voice of one calling in the wilderness, "Prepare the way for the Lord, make his paths straight" (Mk 1:1–3).⁷³

Jerome, commenting on this passage, explained that the trumpet is a reminder of John the Baptist baptizing Christ in the desert, when the voice of God declares him to be his Son:

⁷² Bede, "In Marci Evangelium Expositio," in *Opera Exegetica II.3. In Lucae Evangelium Expositio. In Marci Evangelium Expositio*, ed. David Hurst, I:1-17, CCSL 120 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1960), p. 437: "Initium Evangelii Jesu Christi, filii Dei. Sicut scriptum est in Isaia propheta." Conferendum hoc Evangelii Marci principium principio Mathaei, quo ait: 'Liber generationis Jesu Christi, filii David, filii Abraham,' atque ex utroque unus Dominus noster Iesus Christus Dei et hominis filius est intelligendus. Et apte primus evangelista filium hominis eum secundus filium Dei nominat ut a minoribus paulatim ad maiora sensus noster exsurgeret, ac per fidem et sacramenta humanitatis assumptae ad agnitionem divinae aeternitatis ascenderet"; *ibid.* I:28-33, p. 437, "Mathaeus namque, a nativitate dominica exordium sumens ad tempus usque dominicae resurrectionis seriem suae narrationis perduxit. Marcus ab initio evangelicae praedicationis incipiens pervenit ad tempus usque ascensionis Domini et praedicationis discipulorum eius cunctis gentibus per orbem."

⁷³ "Initium Evangelii Jesu Christi, Filii Dei. Sicut scriptum est in Isaia propheta: Ecce ego mitto angelum meum ante faciem tuam, qui praeparabit viam tuam ante te. 'Vox clamantis in deserto: Parate viam Domini, rectas facite semitas eius.'"

For the Evangelist Mark, the lion plays in the desert. Who plays in the wilderness is the lion, all the other animals join him and harmonize their voices to the lion's, and they do not try to take distance from him. In a similar way consider what John the Baptist said, as well as the word of Jesus our Lord: the servant precedes the Lord. "The beginning of the Gospels of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mk 1:1). The Son of God, therefore, not the son of Joseph. The beginning of the Gospel is the end of the Law: the Law is finished, the Gospel has begun. "As it is written in Isaiah: I send my angel before your face, he will prepare your way" (Mk 1:2).⁷⁴

Jerome highlighted the reference to the Gospel of Matthew and linked both Gospels to the prophecies of Malachi and Isaiah.⁷⁵ This argument was necessary for Jerome to explain that Christ's divinity was known to the prophets. Christ's incarnation fulfilled the prophecy, and the Holy Spirit unveiled Christ's divinity to all. The winged man and the lion play in harmony because they announce the promise of salvation that comes from one and the same God.

The emphasis given to Christ's divine nature in the Gospel of Mark is also visible in his own person, since he is dressed in a fashion different from that of the other Evangelists. The Evangelist Mark is the only one wearing a tunic and a chlamys, while the others are depicted with a pallium over a tunic. His purple chlamys reflects

⁷⁴ "In Marco leonem in heremo personat. 'Initium evangelii Iesu Christi filii Dei. Sicut scriptum est in Esaia propheta: 'Vox clamantis in deserto, Parate viam Domini, rectas facit semitas eius.' Qui in heremo personat, utique leo est, ad cuius vocem omnia animalia pertimescunt, et concurrunt, et fugere non audent. Simulque considerate quod Iohannes Baptista vox dicitur, et Dominus noster Iesus sermo: servus praecedat dominum. 'Initium evangelii Iesu Christi filii Dei.' Ergo non filii Joseph. Initium evangelii, finis legis est: finitur lex, et incipit evangelium. 'Sicut scriptum est in Esaia propheta: Ecce mitto angelum meum ante faciem tuam, qui praeparabit viam tuam': Jerome, "De Principio Marci," in *Tractatus in Marci Evangelium*, I:1, ed. Germain Morin, CCSL 78 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1958), p. 451, cols. 5-16.

⁷⁵ Idem, *In Matheum*, I:3,3, CCSL 77, pp. 16-17, cols. 223-234: "'Hic est enim qui dictus est per Isaiam prophetam, dicentem: Vox clamantis in deserto, parate viam Domini, rectas facite semitas eius.' Animas credentium praeparabat in quibus ambulaturus erat Dominus ut purus in viis purissimis ambularet dicens: 'Habitabo in eis, et inambulabo et ero Deus ipsorum, et ipsi erunt mihi populus.' Porphyrius istum locum Marci evangelistae principio comparat, in quo scriptum est: 'Initium Evangelii Iesu Christi, Filii Dei;' sicut scriptum est in Esaia propheta: 'Ecce mitto Angelum meum ante faciem tuam, qui praeparabit viam tuam, vox clamantis in deserto: Parate viam Domini, rectas facite semitas eius'"; idem, *In Marci*, I:2-3, CCSL 78, p. 452, cols. 38-48: "Quid scriptum est in Esaia propheta? 'Vox clamantis in deserto: Parate viam Domini, rectas facite semitas eius.' Hoc in Esaia scriptum est: expositio autem ipsius capituli in alio propheta melius dicitur. Et ipse dicit evangelista: Iste est, inquit, Iohannes Baptistam de quo etiam Malachias dixit: 'Ecce mitto angelum meum ante faciem tuam, qui praeparabit viam tuam.' Ergo, quo dicit, scriptum est, ad hoc capitulum refertur: 'Vox clamantis in deserto, Parate viam Domini, rectas facite semitas eius.' Ut autem probaret istum esse angelum qui missus est, noluit ex suo probare sermone, sed ex prophetia prophetae."

Christ's clothing as symbol of his flesh, incarnation, and passion.⁷⁶ The purple color of Mark's clothing is also used in the portraits of Luke and John, but by wearing a chlamys, the figure of Mark evokes Bede's allusion to Christ's garment at his passion as a sign of heavenly kingship. The Evangelist Mark, Bede wrote, gave imperial flavor to the garment, turning Matthew's description of a scarlet chlamys into a purple one. Purple is the triumph over death, the tangible sign of Christ's divine nature.⁷⁷

The Luke Portrait

The portrait of Luke (fol. 137v, fig. 3) maintains the layout of the Matthew and Mark portraits of showing the scribe with his symbol, the calf, emerging above his head.⁷⁸ He is represented with a beard, following the Evangelist of the old type, parallel to the Matthew portrait. His orientation, and the way his body sits bending forward recall the posture of Matthew, the other Evangelist who most emphasised Christ's human nature. The Luke's profile silhouette echoes that of the other terrestrial Evangelists, Matthew and Mark, but an important change has been made to the portrait. Whereas the Evangelists Matthew and Mark hold codices, Luke positions his stylus on a scroll, traditionally reserved for representations of the Old Testament. In his Gospel, Luke underlined the continuity between the Jewish priests and Christ, therefore placing Christ's incarnation in history by looking backwards. The reference

⁷⁶ Bede, *In Marcum*, IV.15:16-18, ed. David Hurst, *CCSL* 120 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1960), pp. 627-28, cols. 1245-1294: "Notandum autem quod pro eo quod Marcus ait, 'Et induunt eum purpura,' Matheus ita posuit, 'Et exuentes eum clamidem coccineam circumdederunt ei.' Ubi 'intelligitur quod Matheus ait, chlamidem coccineam circumdederunt ei, hoc Marcus dixisse, indutum purpura. Pro regia enim purpura chlamis illa coccinea ab inludentibus adhibita erat et est rubra quaedam purpura cocco simillima. Potest etiam fieri ut purpuram etiam Marcus commemoraverit quam clamis habebat quamvis esset coccinea.' Mystice ergo in purpura qua indutus est dominus ipsa eius caro quam passionibus obiecit insinuat de qua praemissa dixerat prophetia: 'Quare ergo rubrum est indumentum tuum, et vestimenta tua quasi calcantium in torculari?'"

⁷⁷ Bede, *In Matthaei Expositio*, bk. 4, ch. 27, *PL* 92, cols. 122B-C: "Purpura sive cocco vestitur, cum triumpho victoriosorum martyrum gloriatur."

⁷⁸ *Codex Lindisfarnensis*, 135-37.

to the pre-existent *Logos* in the scroll points to Luke's role as writer of Christ's forerunners in the Old Testament. The comparison with the following portrait of the Evangelist John, who also holds a scroll, might suggest that the story contained in their Gospels went further back in time to witness the divine nature of the *Logos*. Meyer Schapiro exploring the significance of the scroll as attribute of the symbol of John, found explanation in John's depth of insights into the divine mysteries.⁷⁹ As Schapiro pointed out, the Bible describes heaven as a scroll (Is 34:4, Rev 6:14). The scroll in the hands of the Evangelist Luke might evoke the exegetical tradition that explained his Gospel as containing the historical and complete story of the pre-existent *Logos*. In the words of Ambrose, who was the most influential reader of the Gospel of Luke:

This book of the Gospel is written, as we would say, in the genre known as historical. We therefore find that—compared to the other books—it is more concerned to relate facts than to lay down precepts. And, as is the way when writing history, the Evangelist actually begins by telling a story: “There was,” he says, “in the days of Herod, King of Judea, a priest named Zachary” (Lk 1:5).⁸⁰

The portrait celebrates the beginning of the Gospel and characterizes Luke as the Evangelist who wrote of the priestly calf. Luke began his narrative with the priests and culminated with the calf sacrificed for the salvation of humanity from sin. As Ambrose maintained, the Evangelist Luke “continued the story up to a complete digestion” and concluded his Gospel with the Ascension.⁸¹ In doing so, he stressed at

⁷⁹ Meyer Schapiro, “Two Romanesque Drawings in Auxerre and Some Iconographic Problems,” in *Studies in Art and Literature for Bella da Costa Greene*, ed. Dorothy Miner (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1954), 331-49.

⁸⁰ “Historico stilo diximus hunc evangelii librum esse digestum. Denique describendis magis rebus quam exprimendis praeceptis studium uberius conparatione aliorum videmus inpensum. Et ipse evangelista historico more a narratione sumsit exordium. ‘Fuit’ inquit ‘in diebus Herodis regis Iudaeae sacerdos quidam nomine Zacharias’: Ambrose, “Prologus,” in *Expositio Evangelii Secundum Lucam*, col. 7, ed. Marcus Adriaen, *CCSL* 14 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1957), p. 5, lines 109-114; trans. Ide M. Ní Riain, *Commentary of Saint Ambrose on the Gospel According to Saint Luke* (Dublin: Halcyon Press, 2001), p. 4.

⁸¹ “eamque historiam plena digestionem persequitur”: Ambrose, “Prologus,” in *Secundum Lucam*, col. 7, ed. Marcus Adriaen, *CCSL* 14, p. 5, line 114; trans. Ide M. Ní Riain, p. 4.

the end of his Gospel Christ's physical link between earth and heaven. The symbol is holding a closed green codex rendered in the shape of a lozenge. As Anna Esmeijer and many others have described, the lozenge recalls the fourfold structure of the physical world, marking with its shape the contact and material connection between the earth and the celestial realm.⁸²

In the Lindisfarne Gospels, the redemption promised in Luke's Gospel is emphasized by the way the calf appears on the other side of the portrait (fol. 137r, fig. 24), where the liturgical texts for Easter are written. The scribe compiling the text paid attention to leave the upper part of the page empty. He thus left space in the folio at the level in which Luke's calf is painted on its back. Visible through the parchment, since the rest of the portrait is still visible through the skin, the shape of the calf was redrawn on the reverse probably at a later stage with the brown ink used for the tenth-century interlinear glosses in Old English. The calf emphasizes the role of the Evangelist Luke as the one who described Christ as priest and mediator. In these terms the exegesis explained the connection between the calf and his symbol.

Ambrose wrote of the calf:

The calf is the victim offered by priests (Lv 4:3). This fact establishes a link between Luke's Gospel and the calf. Luke's Gospel begins with the priests who offer sacrifices, and it ends with the Calf who takes away the sins of all people and is sacrificed for the whole world. This is a priestly calf. This is He who is both Victim and Priest. Priest, because he intercedes for us—for "we have an advocate with the Father" (Jn 2:1), and this advocate is He—the innocent calf who has washed and redeemed us with his blood.⁸³

⁸² Anna C. Esmeijer, *Divina Quaternitas. A Preliminary Study in the Method and Application of Visual Exegesis* (Amsterdam: Vang Gorcum Assen, 1978); see also Kessler, *Illustrated Bibles*, 51-3; Madeleine Caviness, "Images of Divine Order and the Third Mode of Seeing," *Gesta* 22 (1983): 99-120; Victor Elbern, "Bildstruktur—Sinnzeichen—Bildaussage. Zusammenfassende Studie zur unfigürliche Ikonographie im frühen Mittelalter," *Arte medievale* 1st ser., 1 (1983): 17-37; Benjamin C. Tilghman, "The Shape of the Word: Extralinguistic Meaning in Insular Display Lettering," *Word & Image* 27:3 (2011): 292-308, at 292.

⁸³ "Vitulus enim sacerdotalis est victima. Et bene congruit vitulo hic evangelii liber, quia a sacerdotibus inchoavit et consummavit in vitulo, qui omnium peccata suscipiens pro totius mundi vita est inmolatus; sacerdotalis enim est ille vitulus. Idem quippe et vitulus et sacerdos: sacerdos, quia propitiator est noster—*advocatum* enim ipsum *habemus apud Patrem*—vitulus, quia suo sanguine nos redemit":

The position of the calf directly above the texts for the celebration of Easter enhances the salvific role of Christ, recalling the Gospel's testimony of the priestly sacrifices in Leviticus. Because Christ was from the beginning, his sacrifice was a promise of salvation for the entire world.

The scroll evokes the pre-existent *Logos* and visually links the portrait of Luke to the last Evangelist portrait, that of John, who witnessed the existence of the Word from the beginning (Jn 1:1).

The John Portrait

The figure of John appears in frontal view, looking directly at the beholder (fol. 209v, fig. 4).⁸⁴ This Evangelist gains the highest possibility of seeing, a sensorial and intellectual ability that is granted to John, so beloved to Christ.⁸⁵ In a fashion similar to the other portraits, the illumination represents themes contained in the beginning of John's text as well as the character of his Gospels. The Evangelist holds an empty scroll, its curving shape recalling the scroll of Luke. The Evangelist John, however, differs from Luke, because rather than holding a stylus, John keeps his free hand over his chest.⁸⁶ While the scroll in both cases signifies the antique origin of the beginning of their Gospels, the Evangelist John does not need a stylus, because he began his Gospel like Genesis with the words "*In principio*," providing evidence that

Ambrose, "Prologus," in *Secundum Lucam*, col. 7 CCSL 14, p. 5, lines 118-125; trans. Ide M. Ni Riain, p. 4.

⁸⁴ *Codex Lindisfarnensis*, 137-40; Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society*, 368-70.

⁸⁵ Bede, *In Sancti Joannis Evangelium Expositio*, ch.1, PL 92, col. 637C, "Itaque longe a tribus superioribus evangelistis sublimius elevatus est, ita ut eos quodammodo videas in terra cum Christo homine conversari, illum autem transcendisse nebulam qua tegitur omnis terra, et pervenisse ad liquidum coeli lumen, unde acie mentis acutissima atque firmissima videret: In principio Verbum, Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine, per quem facta sunt omnia." On the figure of John the Evangelist holding the scroll, see Schapiro, "Two Romanesque Drawings," 331-49; Hamburger, *St. John the Divine*.

⁸⁶ Schapiro, "Two Romanesque Drawings," 331-49, at 335-38.

his Gospel was already written from the beginning.⁸⁷

The portrait of John engages with the ways in which pictorial arts can evoke the nature of an incarnate God while hiding his ineffable nature. With long hair parted at the center, he is pictured with Christ-like features and Christ's majesty posture, as Michelle Brown pointed out.⁸⁸ The image of Christ in majesty in the Codex Amiatinus (fol. 796v, fig. 25) and the portrait of the Evangelist John in the Lindisfarne Gospels, share a number of features: the dark hair flowing onto their shoulders, their gaze directed outside the painting, and the figures' enthroned positions. The illuminator fashioned the most philosophical of the Evangelists as Christ because John was the writer who had the greatest access to the mysteries of Christ's divinity. In Bede's words:

The Evangelist John excelled in declaring the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is equal with the Father. [...] He elevated himself much higher than the other three Evangelists, because while they showed how Christ talked to the people on earth, he transcended the clouds that cover the earth and reached the liquid heaven of light, where with the poignancy of his sharp mind he clearly saw: "In the beginning was the Word" (Jn 1:1).⁸⁹

The beholder discerns Christ's features in the person of the Evangelist who best witnessed his celestial nature.

The miniature further explores Christ's dual nature by recalling the equality of the Father and the Son to render God's immutability and eternity. The illuminator referred to the atemporal divinity by labeling the flying eagle with the words "*Imago*

⁸⁷ Bede, *In Sancti Joannis*, ch. 1, PL 92, cols. 635D and ff.; Kessler, "The Word Made Flesh," 141-68; Hamburger, *St. John the Divine*; Małgorzata Krasnodebska-D'Aughton, "Decoration in the 'In Principio' Initials in Early Insular Manuscripts: Christ as a Visible Image of the Invisible God," *Word & Image* 18 (2002): 105-22; Hamburger, *Script as Image*, 6-8; see also Adam S. Cohen, *The Uta Codex: Art, Philosophy, and Reform in Eleventh-Century Germany* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 125.

⁸⁸ Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society*, 368-69.

⁸⁹ Bede, *In Sancti Joannis*, ch. 1, PL 92, cols. 637B-C: "Maxime divinitatem Domini nostri Jesu Christi, qua Patri est aequalis, intendit declarare, eamque praecipue suo Evangelio [...] Itaque longe a tribus superioribus evangelistis sublimius elevatus est, ita ut eos quodammodo videas in terra cum Christo homine conversari, illum autem transcendisse nebulam quare igitur omnis terra, et pervenisse ad liquidum coeli lumen, unde acie mentis acutissima atque firmissima videret: In principio Verbum."

aequilae,” meaning the image of the eagle, but spelled in such a way that the viewer can read “equal” (*aequi*) at the beginning of the word. Although there is the possibility that the misspelling was simply the result of scribal error, the concept of the equality of the Father and the Son was a main theme in the Augustinian exegesis on the Gospel of John, and it was taken over by Bede in his commentary on the opening of the same Gospel. Relying on Augustine, Bede maintained that John was the Evangelist who discussed Christ’s divinity in depth and dealt with the theological argument of the equality of the Son and the Father:

If there be any other thing which intimate the intelligent to the divinity of Christ, in which he is equal to the Father, John almost alone has introduced them into his Gospel.⁹⁰

Bede, reworking Augustinian theories, read the Gospel of John as evidence of the Son’s being the same substance of the Father, and therefore eternal.⁹¹

The John portrait along with the inscription “*Imago aequile*” bring the arts directly into the argument, evoking the processes by which material images elevate the mind to participate in the enigmatic nature of the unseen incarnate God. There is a visual gap between what the beholder can see and what the miniature evokes. The illumination shows Christ’s features in the person of the Evangelist John. Thus, the figure displays Christ’s human appearance through the eyes of the Evangelist who most closely scrutinized his nature. The inscription accompanying the eagle, which directly deals with the ineffable divinity, enhances the paradox of seeing what cannot be seen.⁹² The portrait of John highlights the ways in which pictorial arts can engage

⁹⁰ Ibid., ch. 1, col. 637D: “Et si qua alia sunt quae Christi divinitatem, in qua aequalis est Patri, recte intelligentibus intiment, plenius solus Joannes in Evangelio suo posuit.”

⁹¹ Bede, *In Sancti Joannis*, ch. 1, PL 92, cols. 637A-B; the equality of the Father and the Son is further discussed in Chapter 2.

⁹² Beat Brenk, “Schriftlichkeit und Bildlichkeit in der Hofschule Karls des Großen,” in *Testo e Immagine nell’Alto Medioevo. Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo* 41 (Spoleto, Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo, 1994), 2:631-691.

with the Christian paradox of the Word made flesh by prompting the beholder to activate a mechanism of discerning the invisible in the visible work. There was an exegetical reason for exposing the ways in which painting could evoke the ineffable divinity in the image of John. Augustine interpreted the figure of John as the Evangelist who gave proof to Christians that, because of the Son and through him, we can see the Father. The Father is visible through the Son, because they are equal; because the Son is equal with the Father, he is eternal, and therefore inaccessible even to the mind's eye:

Jesus added: "He who sees me sees also the Father." Therefore if he [Christ] was sent, equal to the Father, let us not judge him by the weakness of the flesh, but let us reflect upon his majesty, clothed with flesh, not submerged by flesh. For as God remaining with the Father, among men he became a man so that, through him who became a man for you, you might become such as grasps God.⁹³

Augustine continued:

He became man for the body's eye so that, believing in him who could be seen bodily, you would be cured to see him himself who you could not see spiritually.⁹⁴

Since the equality refers to the Father's deepest unity with the Son, namely Christ's divinity, the Augustinian theology interpreted the Gospel of John by emphasizing the human mind's inability to see the image of God.

The miniature interprets the Augustinian tradition that reflects on the function of images in relationship with the equality of Christ with the Father. In the illumination, the letters of the inscription evoke the relation with the Father, implying

⁹³ Augustine, "Tractatus XIV," in *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus*, CCSL 36 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1954), 12:2, trans. John W. Retting, *St. Augustine. Tractates on the Gospel of John 11–27* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1988), p. 76: "Subiecit statim: 'Qui me vidit, vidit et Patrem' (Jn 14:8–9). Si ergo aequalis Patri missus est, non eum aestimemus ex infirmitate carnis, sed cogitemus maiestatem indutam carne, non oppressam carne. Manens enim Deus apud Patrem, apud homines factus est homo, ut tu per illum qui ad te factus est homo, fieres talis qualis capit Deum."

⁹⁴ Ibid., trans. Retting, p. 76: "Factus est ille homo ad corporis oculum, ut credens in eum qui videri corporaliter potuit, curareris ad eum ipsum videndum quem spiritualiter videre non poteris."

that his divine nature has no visible form. Thus, in the miniature the idea of equality is evoked in the letters of the inscription, probably reflecting the Augustinian argument by which in Christ's nature the pre-existent *Logos* is united with—and clothed by—his human flesh, but it remains divine in the Word. Augustine explained that Christians see Christ's human and divine nature through the Gospels, unlike the Jews who saw the man but not the Father behind him.⁹⁵ The miniature shows that pictorial arts activate the paradox of recognizing the invisible Father through the Son's human features.

The Veil as a Metaphor of Painting

The curtain in the Matthew page acts at several levels as a metaphor for the role and function of painting as a means of spiritual understanding of the Scripture. It reveals how textiles were for Christians privileged materials because the veil itself appears in the Bible as an image of Christ's body (Heb 10:19–20). Thus, in parallel with Christ's divine nature concealed behind his flesh, the illuminator enhanced the textile's material qualities of revealing how the invisible face of God is hidden within the Scripture. The textiles provided the illuminator with the advantages of rendering not just the likeness of the veil, but also the fact that imitating textiles enhances the material qualities of the fabric; the curtain simultaneously reveals and conceals what is behind it. As such, the veil works as a metaphor of the beholder's engagement with the painting, reflecting the ways in which the viewer approaches the painting's

⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 76-77: 'Tanto tempore vobiscum sum, et non cognovistis me, Philippe? Qui me vidit, vidit et Patrem.' Quare illi non illum videbant? Ecce videbant illum, et Patrem non videbant: videbant carnem, sed maiestas latebat. Quod videbant discipuli qui amaverunt, viderunt et Iudaei qui crucifixerunt. Intus ergo erat totus ille, et sic intus in carne, ut apud Patrem maneret; non enim deseruit Patrem quando venit ad carnem."

opaque and synthetic language.⁹⁶

The curtain reveals the face of the Gospels, but nothing is visible on the parchment of the pictured codices nor on the scrolls that the Evangelists hold. Painting the Word of the Gospels allows viewers to see the prophecies of salvation and their fulfillment, but God's likeness cannot be seen. The Lindisfarne portraits engage with the soul's desire to grasp Christ's divine nature, but cannot, obviously, show it. The illuminator was probably acquainted with the potential of the pictorial arts to negate the representation as a tool to evoke the invisible divine.⁹⁷ Bede defined pictorial arts for their property of hiding more than revealing. He noticed the assonance between the verb to hide, *celo*, with the one referring to painting, *caelo*, and ultimately with the sky, *caelum*. In a poetic fashion, he compared the painting to the sky and praised pictorial arts for their capacity to conceal the invisible behind a variety of colors in parallel with the sky, which covers behind its stars what to the human mind is inaccessible and obscure.⁹⁸ The curtain opens the sight to the empty space between the Evangelist Matthew and the mirroring face, where an invisible voice is calling, reminding viewers that the soul's desire to see God face to face is, for now, just a reflection, an intellectual expectation only.

⁹⁶ On the opacity of Insular art, see Benjamin C. Tilghman, "On the Enigmatic Nature of Things in Anglo-Saxon Art," *Different Visions. A Journal of New Perspectives on Medieval Art* 4 (January, 2014); see also Louis Marin, *Parole Mangée et autres Essais Théologico-Politiques* (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1986); idem, *Opacité de la Peinture: Essais sur la Représentation au Quattrocento* (Paris: Usher, 1989).

⁹⁷ On the invisibility in painting, see Herbert L. Kessler, "Real Absence: Early Medieval Art and the Metamorphosis of Vision," in *Spiritual Seeing*, 104-48; Krüger, *Das Bild als Schleier*; Wolf, *Schleier und Spiegel*; Nino Zchomelidse, "Das Bild im Busch: zu Theorie und Ikonographie der alttestamentlichen Gottesvision im Mittelalter," in *Die Sichtbarkeit des Unsichtbaren: zur Korrelation von Text und Bild im Wirkungskreis der Bibel*, ed. Bernd Janowski and Nino Zchomelidse (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003), 165-89; Ganz and Lentjes, *Ästhetik des Unsichtbaren*; Ittai Weinryb, "Living Matter: Materiality, Maker, and Ornament in the Middle Ages," *Gesta* 52/2 (2013): 113-32.

⁹⁸ Bede, "De Orthographia," in *Opera Didascalica. Pars I*, ed. David Hurst and Charles W. Jones, *CCSL* 123A, pp. 1-57, at 18, cols. 278-282: "Celo, celas (id est, abscondo) per simplicem 'e' scribendum / caelo, caelas, cum picturam significat, per diphthongum 'ae' proferendum. Unde caelum melius intelligitur dictum ab eo quod caelati instar multifaria sit siderum varietate depictum quam quod invisibilia et incerta mortalibus celet arcana." On Bede's text on orthography, see Anna C. Dionisotti, "On Bede, Grammars, and Greek," *Revue Bénédictine* 92 (1982): 111-41.

The images of the Evangelists are visually linked to one another; they share such iconographical elements as the trumpets played by the symbols of the Evangelists Matthew and Mark, the unshaved visages of Mark and John as well as Matthew's and Luke's bearded faces. Looking at the portraits altogether, the beholder discerns the ways in which the Evangelists provide diverse characters of the unique divine source that inspired them. The beholder's mind interweaves the biblical passages they refer to, thereby revealing how Christ's divinity is hidden in Scripture. The act of interweaving the warps and wefts of a virtual textile continues in the present by means of the beholder's intellectual activities. An author who was influential in the Isles, Cassiodorus, made such a point in his writings.⁹⁹ Relying on Quintilian, he defined painting as the Greek *ποιητική* (*poietiche*), which refers to an action that the eyes have to bring to completion, thus including reception of the arts as part of the process of painting.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ The influence of Cassiodorus in the British Isles has witnesses in the arts as evidenced by studies by Meyvaert, "Bede, Cassiodorus, and the Codex Amiatinus," 827-83 and in the transmission of texts listed by Bernhard Bischoff and Michael Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries from the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian*. Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 10 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹⁰⁰ "Artium aliae sunt positae in inspectione, id est cognitione et aestimatione rerum, qualis est astrologia: nullum exigens actum, sed ipso rei cuius studium habet, intellectu contenta, quae θεωρητική vocatur. Alia in agendo, cuius in hoc finis est, ut ipso actu perficiatur, nihilque post actum operis relinquat, quae πρακτική dicitur, qualis saltatio est. Alia in effectu, quae operis, quod oculis subicitur consummatione, finem accipiunt, quam ποιητικήν appellamus, qualis est pictura;" Cassiodorus, "De Arte Rhetorica," in *De Artibus ac Disciplinis Liberalium Litterarum*, 2:2, PL 70, cols. 1157B-C; Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 2.18.2; see *Institutio Oratoria: Book 2. Introduction, Text, Commentary*, ed. Tobias Reinhardt and Michael Winterbottom (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 30.

Chapter 2

The Geometric Construction of the Evangelist Portraits

A Mistaken Perspective

Comparing the portraits of the high priest Ezra (fig. 26) and the Evangelist Matthew (fig. 27) in the Codex Amiatinus and the Lindisfarne Gospels respectively, scholars have considered the two miniatures as if the illuminator of the Evangelist Matthew depended on the figure of the Codex Amiatinus—or its archetype—but did not understand its pictorial rendering.¹⁰¹ The three-dimensional portrait of Ezra in the Codex Amiatinus stands in contrast with that of the Evangelist, painted flat on the parchment of the Gospel book. The Evangelist Matthew sits on a bench that simultaneously appears two-dimensional and three-dimensional because the legs of the bench are constructed as flat surfaces in continuity with the frame, while they also extend in depth. According to scholars the illuminator of the Lindisfarne Gospels was not skilled enough to render the proportions and depth as the painter of the Codex Amiatinus was. While scholars have described the pictorial space in the Evangelist portrait as the result of a mistake, they have praised the illuminator's accuracy in creating the carpet pages. Following this line of reasoning, the talented illuminator was able to show his extreme precision in the ornament of the Gospels, but when he painted the portraits he could not replicate the three-dimensional space of his model and featured objects that do not extend perfectly in the pictorial space.

Because of the apparent inaccuracy of the spatial organization in the Matthew page as well as in the other Evangelist portraits, the subject of the geometric rendering

¹⁰¹ Bruce-Mitford, "Decoration and Ornament," 147-49; Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society*, 360.

of certain objects has not been treated, even though the mathematical layouts of the carpet pages have attracted the attention of scholars.¹⁰² Taking a different position I am concerned with the geometrical economy of the Evangelist portraits in light of mathematical knowledge as it was known in the eighth-century Northumbria.

Boethius' scientific treatises provide visual examples and descriptions of surfaces and solids that are comparable to the geometric shapes in the Evangelist portraits.¹⁰³ It is the task of this chapter to readdress the critical problem of the geometric construction of the Evangelist portraits, especially the portraits of the Evangelists Matthew and John, and interpret the representation of the second and third dimensions as intentional.¹⁰⁴

The puzzling geometrical design of some items in the Evangelist portraits finds comparison in other manuscripts available in the British Isles. The illumination of the Tabernacle in the Codex Amiatinus displays flat surfaces and the three-dimensional objects on the same pictorial surface. The portrait of Ezra in the Codex Amiatinus displays mathematical tools that shed light on the role of the liberal arts in the manuscript itself and in the miniatures of the Lindisfarne Gospels as well. Both

¹⁰² The geometric layout of the carpet pages has been the focus of several publications, see Robert D. Stevick, "The Design of Lindisfarne Gospels Folio 138v," *Gesta* 22/1 (1983): 3-12; idem, "The 4 x 3 Crosses in the Lindisfarne and Lichfield Gospels," *Gesta* 25 (1986): 171-84; Jacques Guilmain, "The Geometry of the Cross-carpet Pages in the Lindisfarne Gospels," *Speculum* 62 (1987): 21-52; Robert D. Stevick, "The Art of Radically Coherent Geometry," in *Villard's Legacy. Studies in Medieval Technology, Science and Art in Memory of Jean Gimpel*, ed. Marie-Therese Zenner (Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 211-28.

¹⁰³ On the study of the liberal arts in the early middle ages, see Brigitte Englisch, *Die Artes Liberales im frühen Mittelalter (5.–9. Jh.). Das Quadrivium und der Komputus als Indikatoren für Kontinuität und Erneuerung der exakten Wissenschaften zwischen Antike und Mittelalter* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1994), 41-138.

¹⁰⁴ On the modes of perceptions see Caviness, "Images of Divine Order," 99-120; on the coexistence of the second and third dimensions in Carolingian Art, see Bezalel Narkiss, "Some Compositional Aspects of the Carolingian Ada Group," in *Riforma Religiosa e Arti nell'Epoca Carolingia*, ed. Alfred Schmidt (Bologna: CLUEB, 1983), 93-97; Brenk, "Schriftlichkeit," 2:631-82; Herbert L. Kessler, "'Filled to the Brim': The Meaning of Perspective in Carolingian Art," in *"Ars Auro Gemmisque Prior." Mélanges en Hommage à Jean-Pierre Caillet*, ed. Chrystèle Blondeau, Brigitte Boissavit-Camus, Véronique Boucherat, et al. (Zagreb: University of Zagreb, International Research Center for Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, 2013): 181-88.

manuscripts provide insights on the role of mathematical reasoning for the understanding of Scripture and the perception of material images.

The Geometric Shapes in the Evangelist Portraits

Pure shapes outline some objects displayed in the illuminations of the Evangelists. The Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and all their symbols have haloes drawn as perfect circles made with a compass (figs. 1–4). All the Evangelist portraits represent seats constructed with juxtaposing quadrangular surfaces. The Evangelist Mark holds a quadrangular codex, while the desk he is using for writing is drawn as a circle. The scrolls in the hands of the Evangelists Luke and John take the shape of semicircles. The illuminator used a pictorial language that encourages the beholder to interpret the portraits by means of a dynamic process in which the sign on the parchment can refer simultaneously to material things and to abstract forms.¹⁰⁵

The inscriptions provide reasons for interpreting the abstract language that gives shape to things and letters as engaging with the invisible. The geometrical configuration of the objects in the Evangelist portraits also features some letters. Lozenges define the letter “O” in the portraits of Matthew, Luke, and John (figs. 1, 3 and 4). The letters “M” in the inscriptions of both the miniatures of the Evangelists Matthew and Mark describe cross shapes (figs. 1 and 2). In the portrait of John, the letter “S” is composed of joined triangles (fig. 4). Tilghman, Kendrick, Hahn, and Hamburger among other scholars have investigated the medieval understanding of the pictorial embellishment of the letters as an artistic response to the challenge of

¹⁰⁵ On the synthesis of material things and abstract signs see Aden Kumler, *Translating Truth Ambitious Images and Religious Knowledge in Late Medieval France and England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); Kumler and Lakey, “*Res et Significatio*”; Marin, *Parole Mangée*; idem, *Opacité de la Peinture*.

representing the theological issue of the Word made Flesh. The ornament of the Book of Kells is a telling example. Seeing letters in the Book of Kells (Dublin, Trinity College Library, MS. A. I. 58), according to Tilghman's interpretation, was not just a process of reading a sequence of consecutive letters and words. Rather, seeing letters as signs, he pointed out how the makers of the Book of Kells enhanced the geometric nature of the script with the goal of transforming the letters into shapes bearing meanings.¹⁰⁶ For the initial word *Quoniam* of the beginning of the Gospel of Luke (fol. 188r, fig. 28), Tilghman suggested that the presence of the "ω" compels the viewer to go in search of an "A," which appears only through the combination of the "V" (an angled U also forming part of the *crux decussata*) and the lozenge surrounding the two letters. The lozenge works as abstract symbol of the *Logos* in its quadrifold form recalling the shape of the world. Thus the illuminator changed the nature of the letters alpha, omega, and chi, the signs of the eternal God and the incarnate Christ, to enhance their semantic power.

In the Lindisfarne Gospels the geometric design of the letters exposes the ways in which script and ornament work as a whole to show that because of Christ's incarnation the letters are animated with several meanings that go beyond the literal sense of the alphabet.¹⁰⁷ The Evangelist portraits in the Lindisfarne Gospels explore such belief by drawing certain letters of the inscriptions as crosses or lozenges, thus reflecting the medieval understanding of the geometric aspect of the letters as delivering their deepest meanings. The process of seeing lozenges and circles within the letters recalls the ways in which the early medieval exegetes understood the original features of the letters in geometric fashion. Isidore of Seville, Cassiodorus,

¹⁰⁶ Tilghman, "Symbolic Use," 124.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 165.

and Bede posed the critical problem of the formal aspect of the Word at the beginning of time.¹⁰⁸ This question developed into theories about how certain letters could have been, at their origin, pure and perfect shapes. Isidore of Seville in the influential collection of etymologies explained that a “T” was the sign for the cross, and that the letter “O” in its circular form should be understood as containing all knowledge and, because of its endless shape, pointed to the completeness of the divine.¹⁰⁹ Reflecting the exegetical tradition that praised the potential of geometry in evoking the invisible, the illuminator provided the beholder with the experience of the transformation of letters into lozenges, triangles, and crosses.

The haloes, seats, codices, and scrolls in all the Evangelist portraits recall the geometric fashion of the letters directly engaging with the Word made Flesh described in the Gospel of John (Jn 1:1). The illuminator expressed the potential of John’s sight by drawing his eyes as perfect circles made with a compass. The marks of the tool are still visible on the reverse of the folio, where the geometrical drawings were made or redrawn (fig. 29). The Evangelist John could see Christ’s nature through perfect and atemporal geometrical knowledge. He was the most suitable among the Evangelists

¹⁰⁸ Finding the original meanings of words included several linguistic exercises: the description of the etymological meanings of words, the use of definitions, and the translation of individual words from Greek to Latin. See for example, Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmorum*, ed. Marcus Adriaen CCSL 97/98 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1958); Jerome, *Liber Interpretationes Hebraicorum Nominum*, ed. Paul De Lagarde CCSL 72 (ibid., 1959), 59-161; Bede, *De Arte Metrica et de Schematis et Tropis*, ed. Calvin B. Kendall CCSL 123A (ibid., 1975), 60-171; the tradition continued well into the ninth century, see Hrabanus Maurus, *De Computo*, ed. Wesley Stevens, CCCM 44 (ibid., 1997), 165-321.

¹⁰⁹ “T, figuram demonstrans Dominicae crucis: unde, et Hebraice signum interpretatur; de qua dictum est, in Ezechiele, angelo: transi per mediam Jerusalem, et signa thau in frontes virorum gementium, et dolentium,” in “De Litteris Communibus,” *Etymologiae*, ed. Wallace Lindsay, *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum sive Originum* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1911), 1:3, lines 27-30; for the letter “O,” see for example Beatus of Liébana: “Nam figura ipsa litterae, id est A, tam in grecis litteris quam in latinis, tribus ducitur virgulis pari equalitate porrectis; unde non sine causa divinitatis unitatem dixerunt esse maiores. ω tribus equalitatis in greco virgulis subiacentibus ex parte subrectis scribitur, in latino autem O quadam circuli rotunditate concluditur; nam et in hac conclusione continens omnia et protegens divinitas declaratus. Porro quod ad elementorum hac litterarum pertinet rationem, elementa haec scientiae sunt initia et quaedam arts stultos ad sapientiam ducens. Ergo alfa initium sapientiae quod est complementum graecae A et ω, et apud nos O medietas quaedam habetur, significat et initium sapientiae et complementum et medietatem ipsum esse dominum Iesum Christum, mediatorem Dei et hominum,” in *Tractatus de Apocalipsin*, ed. Roger Gryson, CCSL 107C (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 71-2.

for reflecting on the ways in which letters and pictorial arts could engage with the mysterious nature of the Word made Flesh.

The portrait of John displays the nature of pictures as enlivened script by showing John's inscription as if it were painting, while his person is rendered flat, like the letters (fig. 30). In a way that is different from the other Evangelists who sit in profile on the side of the page, the Evangelist John is placed frontally at the center of the folio. The letters flank the Evangelist on both sides, thus including the Evangelist within the composition. A black line defines the figure of the Evangelist as a flat silhouette.¹¹⁰ Curvilinear lines of pure color render the fabric folds in his clothes; these lines do not create any shadow, making it difficult for the viewer to distinguish whether the figure is meant to be seen as a three-dimensional body or a flat surface. Whereas the inscriptions of the other Evangelists appear in black ink, large yellow letters over red ground compose the words "*O agios Iohannes*". The large blue lines that define the folds of the garment worn by the Evangelist John are comparable to the large letters of pure color that compose the Evangelist's name. The formal comparison between the textile and the letters enhances the pictorial aspect of the inscription. The miniature compares the figure of John to the letters up to the point of equating writing with pictorial language, engaging with the interpretation of painting as living writing.¹¹¹ In Scripture and exegesis, John was recognized as the Evangelist of the Word; his flat pictorial rendering evokes the Enlivened Word that he witnessed and discussed in his Gospel.¹¹²

The miniature sets the figure of the Evangelist John in parallel with the script and provides arguments about the idea of living writing that was so widespread in the

¹¹⁰ All the Evangelists' contours are marked with black ink, which makes the figures appear flat.

¹¹¹ Kessler, "The Book as Icon," 90-92; Hamburger, *St. John the Divine*, 9; Małgorzata Krasnodębska-D'Aughton, "Decoration in the *In principio*," 105-21.

¹¹² See note 94.

Insular art.¹¹³ Paul in his epistles used the letter, the inscribed mark, as a metaphor for the literal sense conveyed by the inscription, asserting that the Christian story is “written not in ink but in the Spirit of the Living God” (2 Cor 3:3).¹¹⁴ Kendrick demonstrated that interpreting the Pauline equation of the letter penned in ink to the literal reading, such early medieval exegetes as Origen, Jerome, and Augustine compared the letter to the body of Christ and understood the alphabetic inscription itself as the embodiment of the divine.¹¹⁵ Following an Early Christian tradition in which the letters are shaped as animals or living beings, Insular manuscripts expose interwoven letters and figures by drawing letters as shapes, or populating the display script with figures.¹¹⁶

In the John portrait, the enlivening of the letters appears not so much as a representation of living creatures as the result of a process of understanding. By displaying the script in a pictorial rendering, and, vice versa, painting as living writing, the miniature reflects on the perception of the pictorial arts as an act of interpretation. The illuminator explored in the pictorial construction of the Evangelist portraits how seeing spiritually involved a process of abstraction from the material objects to the pure ideas. Such abstraction was important for seeing the signs of the New Testament in the Old, their order, and unity. The idea of finding the geometrical

¹¹³ Kendrick, *Animating the Letter*, 65-109; Tilghman, “Symbolic Use,” 124-64; idem, “The Shape of the Word,” 292-308.

¹¹⁴ “Manifestati quod epistola estis Christi, ministrata a nobis, et scripta non atramento, sed Spiritu Dei vivi: non in tabulis lapideis, sed in tabulis cordis carnalibus”; Kendrick, *Animating the Letter*, 65-109.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Oleg Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament*, The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fines Arts (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1992) explored the relationship between the graphic signs and their signifiers; Jean-Claude Bonne and Emmanuelle Pirotte found Insular works of art suitable for analysing the role of signs in pictorial arts: Bonne, “De l’Ornemental,” 207-49; Emmanuelle Pirotte, “Ornament and Script in Early Medieval Insular and Continental Manuscripts: Reasons, Functions, Efficiency,” in *From Ireland Coming: Irish Art from the Early Christian Period to the Late Gothic and Its European Context*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 277-88; Herbert L. Kessler has discussed how material images activated hermeneutic processes more complex than reading texts: Kessler, “*Aliter enim Videtur Pictura*,” 701-26; idem, “Dynamic Signs and Spiritual Designs,” (forthcoming).

order contained within sacred writings belonged to a tradition mainly expressed by Cassiodorus and had a pictorial counterpart in manuscripts produced in the British Isles. Evidence for Cassiodorus' relevance in the Insular environment might be found in such manuscripts as the Durham Cassiodorus. Containing the *Explanations of the Psalms*, the eighth-century Durham Cassiodorus (Durham, Cathedral Library, MS B. II. 30, fol. 81v, fig. 31) portrays David playing a stringed instrument. In a manner similar to the Matthew page in the Lindisfarne Gospels, the illumination exposes a highly geometrical constructions in order to evoke abstract ideas of order and divinity that are not representable. The circle at the left of David's head contains the prophet's name. In its shape, position, and content, it recalls another circle painted on folio 172v, representing Psalm 90 (fig. 32).¹¹⁷ The Psalms did not identify the figure trampling the beasts. Works of art like the Durham Cassiodorus interpreted it as the victorious Christ and engaged with his divine nature by means of geometry or music. The circle held by Christ, labeled "David" because Christ was his descendant, explores the potential of geometry in shaping the idea of harmony. Many references might be seen in the circle. The world's harmonic movement was implied in the characteristic of the circle to return to its original point. The earth while rotating was believed to produce music; in agreement with that harmony, David played his instrument to reproduce such a modulation of salvation, after Saul had broken it.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ "Thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk: and thou shalt trample under foot the lion and the dragon;" Ps 90:13. On music in the visual art see Tilman Seebass, *Musikdarstellung und Psalterillustration im Früheren Mittelalter: Studien Ausgehend von einer Ikonologie der Handschrift Paris Bibliothèque Nationale Fonds Latin 1118* (Bern: A. Francke, 1973); Morrison, "Know Thyself," 369-480; Tilman Seebass, "The Illustration of Music Theory in the Late Middle Ages: Some Thoughts on Its Principles and a Few Examples," in *Music Theory and Its Sources*, ed. Andre Barbera (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 201-34; Isabelle Marchesin, "Les Images Musicales Occidentales aux VIII^e et IX^e Siècles. Une Exégèse Visuelle," in *Biblical Studies in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Claudio Leonardi and Giovanni Orlandi (Florence: SISMEL, Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2005), 269-82; Anna Maria Busse Berger, *Medieval Music and the Art of Memory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

¹¹⁸ "Nam ut Orphei lyram, Syrenarum cantus tanquam fabulosa taceamus, quid de David dicimus, qui ab spiritibus immundis Saulem disciplina saluberrimae modulationis eripuit, novoque modo per

The text in the manuscript comments on Psalm 90's engaging with Christ overcoming evil, evoked pictorially by the figure trampling the beast. The commentary maintains that Christ's victory resides in his divine nature, consubstantial and coeternal with the Father.¹¹⁹ The properties of the circle, with its equal distance from the center and endless shape, generated theological concepts regarding God's substance.¹²⁰

Pure shapes were praised for their ability to embody numbers. Discussions about shapes in Isidore, Boethius, and Cassiodorus relied on the geometrical nature of numbers. Appropriating the importance given to the unity by Plato and his followers, these authors maintained that the number one was the principal number and generator of measurements. Drawing lines or planes and modeling in three dimensions were processes based on specific relationships with the original unity. Numbers and dimensions belonged to the Scriptures as well. Cassiodorus persisted in searching for calculations in the Old Testament because God himself "had disposed all things in measure, number, and weight."¹²¹ He noticed the presence of numbers and dimensions

auditum sanitatem contulit regi, quam medici non poterant herbarum potestatibus operari? Asclepiades quoque, medicus, maiorum attestazione doctissimus, freneticum quendam per symphoniam pristinae sanitati reddidisse memoratur. Multa sunt autem, quae in aegris hominibus per hanc disciplinam leguntur facta miracula. Coelum ipsum, sicut supra memoravimus, dicitur sub armoniae dulcedine revolvi; et ut breviter cuncta complectar, quicquid in supernis sive terrenis rebus convenienter secundum auctoris sui dispositionem geritur, ab hac disciplina non refertur exceptum": Cassiodorus, "De Musica," *Institutiones*, 2:5, ed. Mynors, pp. 148-49.

¹¹⁹ "*Super aspidem et basiliscum ambulabis, et conculcabis leonem et draconem*. Hic iam divina virtus exprimitur, quae tantis rebus saevientibus imperavit. Nam omnia ista nomina diabolo congruenter aptantur: *aspis* est, dum occulte percutit; *basiliscus*, cum palam venena disseminat; *leo*, dum persequitur innocentes; *draco*, cum negligentes impia voracitate deglutit. Verum haec omnia glorioso adventu Domini pedibus ipsius prostrata iacuerunt. Solus enim tam ferocia valuit subdere, qui Patri coaeternus et consubstantialis secundum divinitatem probatur existere. Haec si diligenter sanctorum Patrum praedicatione tractemus, nec aliqua dementium haeretica pravitate turbemur, omnia nobis, sicut dicta sunt, absoluta veritate constabunt": Cassiodorus, *Expositio*, Psalm 90:13, *CCSL* 98, p. 834, lines 216-28.

¹²⁰ Insular works of art reworked the idea of endless return to the original point that belongs to the circle. The eleventh-century Tiberius Psalter (London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius V, fol. 7r), for example, featured circles to envision God's "body" in his atemporal nature; see Laura Cochrane, "'Where There Is No Time': The Quadrivium and Images of Eternity in Three Eleventh-Century Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts" (Ph.D. diss., University of Delaware, 2009), 82-84.

¹²¹ Ws 11:21; "Sic arithmetica disciplina magna laude dotata est, quando et rerum opifex Deus dispositiones suas sub numeri, ponderis et mensurae quantitate constituit; sicut ait Salomon: 'Omnia in numero, mensura et pondere fecisti' (Ws 11:21). Creatura siquidem Dei sic in numero facta cognoscitur, quando ipse in Evangelio dicit: 'Vestri autem et capilli capitis omnes numerati sunt' (Mt

in the Scripture, but he found it more important to apply mathematical principles for accessing meanings contained in the Bible.¹²² We might have an idea of how this process worked by looking at the structure and content of his *Explanation of the Psalms*.¹²³ The commentary underlined the number of divisions of the psalms, the shapes of the objects mentioned in the text, the order of the words in the rhetorical figures, and the role of pure shapes in engaging the intelligible. Finding numbers and shapes in the sacred texts meant seeing their fundamental structures, and therefore reaching their deepest significance.¹²⁴

The research for the mathematical organization of Scripture had a theological reason in Christ's dual nature. Cassiodorus himself explained that such heretics as Sabellius, Arius, and Manes, who did not recognize the Son as consubstantial with the Father, failed to see the unity of the Old and the New Testaments,

The Father is not subject to birth, the Son was born, the Holy Spirit proceeded from both the Father and the Son. [The Scriptures] reveal one God, one Holy Trinity, coeternal and equal to the Omnipotent. Christ maintained his divinity and took on the flesh of humanity, keeping the properties of each nature all of them revealed in one person. The Old Testament relies on the New; the New has origin in the Old. All is unified in all [...]¹²⁵

Then Cassiodorus turned to the language of geometry to express the unity of the Testaments accomplished in the spiritual Church:

10:30). Item creatura Dei constituta est in mensura, sicut ipse in Evangelio testatur: 'Quis autem vestrum cogitans potest adicere ad staturam suam cubitum unum' (Mt 6:27)? Item Esaias propheta dicit: 'Qui coelum metitur palmo, et terram tenet clausa manu' (Is 40:12). Rursus creatura Dei probatur facta sub pondere; sicut ait in Proverbiis Salomonis: 'Et librabat fontes aquarum, et paulo post: Quando appendebat fundamenta terrae, cum eo eram' (Prv 8:28–29). Quapropter, operae Dei singulares atque magnificae necessaria definitione conclusae sunt, ut, sicut eum omnia condidisse credimus, ita et quemammodum facta sunt aliquatenus disceremus," in "Praefatio," *Institutiones*, bk. 2, ed. Mynors, pp. 89–90.

¹²² Englisch, *Artes Liberales*, 58.

¹²³ Cassiodorus, *Expositio*.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ "Patrem quippe docens ingenitum, Filium genitum, Spiritum sanctum de Patre et Filio procedentem, unum Deum, sanctam praedicans Trinitatem, coaeternam sibi et aequaliter omnipotentem, Dominumque Christum manentem in deitate sua et carne humanitatis assumptae, salva uniuscuiusque proprietate naturae, unam confiteris esse personam. Veteri testamento de novo fidem faciens, novum a veteri exortum esse cognoscens": Cassiodorus, "Praefatio," *Expositio*, ch. 17, *CCSL* 97, p. 23, lines 20–32.

[The church] is unified in the circle of the entire world, it shines as a beautiful pyramid and proceeds toward the eternal reign.¹²⁶

Finding the mathematical underlying order of the Bible meant seeing the structural unity of the Old and New Testaments in order to elevate the soul to the celestial realm.

The geometric contructions within the portraits find comparison in such manuscripts as the Durham Cassiodorus. To a wider extent, the role of geometry at the opening of the veil visible in the Matthew page presents arguments also displayed in the Codex Amiatinus. The long scholarly tradition that interprets Ezra in the Codex Amiatinus and the Evangelist Matthew in the Lindisfarne Gospels can be explored in this sense as supporting the role of geometrical reasoning within the process of spiritual approach to holy Writ.

Scriba Velox in Lege Moysi: Ezra and the Spiritual Interpretation of Scripture

The high priest Ezra in the Codex Amiatinus, like the Evangelist Matthew in the Lindisfarne Gospels, appears in profile, seated on a bench (figs. 26 and 27). Ezra rests his feet on a footstool and pushes one leg forward; his head is slightly bent over the codex that he opens with one hand, while he holds a stylus with the other. Ezra's and Matthew's matching positions, along with the fact that they both have long gray hair and wear a pallium and a tunic, have brought scholars to interpret either the Codex Amiatinus as a direct model for the Lindisfarne Gospels, or to discern a common source for both manuscripts. Meyvaert identified the original model in a portrait of the Roman statesman Cassiodorus contained in a lost manuscript called *Codex Grandior*, of which a partial description of its illuminations was transmitted in

¹²⁶ "Tamen de totius mundi circulo congregata resplendens in modum pulcherrimae pyramidis ad aeterna regna perduceris": *ibid.*, line 32.

texts.¹²⁷ Cassiodorus himself used the words *Codex Grandior* to describe this book produced in his scriptorium and embellished with the illumination of a Tabernacle, probably along with Cassiodorus' own portrait. Meyvaert pointed out how the statesman's introduction to the *Institutiones* evoked this picture in the passage describing his own figure seated on a chair reading the nine codices of Scripture.¹²⁸ Cassiodorus' features contained in the lost manuscript, according to Meyvaert, would also have been discerned by Bede, who described a man seated in the foreground of a bookcase that he saw in a manuscript at Wearmouth-Jarrow.¹²⁹ Meyvaert reinforced the connection between Bede and the lost illumination and understood that Bede himself painted the Ezra portrait looking at the portrait of Cassiodorus contained in the *Codex Grandior*.¹³⁰ The resemblance between the figures of Matthew and Ezra, furthermore, developed the belief that a common Cassiodoran model was available for

¹²⁷ Meyvaert, "Bede, Cassiodorus, and the Codex Amiatinus," 827-83; on the miniature's connection to Cassiodorus and the *Codex Grandior* see Karen Corsano, "The First Quire of the Codex Amiatinus and the Institutiones of Cassiodorus," *Scriptorium* 41 (1987): 3-34; George Henderson, "Cassiodorus and Eadfrith Once Again," in *The Age of Migrating Ideas. Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland. Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Insular Art Held in the National Museums of Scotland in Edinburgh, 3-6 January 1991*, ed. Michael R. Spearman and John Higgitt (Edinburgh: National Museums of Scotland, 1993), 82-9; idem, *Vision and Image in Early Christian England* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 77-87; Jennifer O'Reilly, "The Library of Scripture. Views from Vivarium and Wearmouth-Jarrow," in *New Offerings, Ancient Treasures. Studies in Medieval Art for George Henderson*, ed. Paul Binski (Stroud: Sutton, 2001), 3-39.

¹²⁸ Meyvaert, "Bede, Cassiodorus, and the Codex Amiatinus," 872-73; Cassiodorus, "Praefatio" in *Institutiones*, ed. Mynors, p. 8: "Quos ego cunctos novem codices auctoritatis divinae, ut senex potui, sub collatione priscorum codicum amicis ante me legentibus sedula lectione transivi; ubi multum me laborasse Domino iuvante profiteor."

¹²⁹ Meyvaert, "Bede, Cassiodorus, and the Codex Amiatinus," 872; Scott DeGregorio, "The Figure of Ezra in the Writings of Bede and the Codex Amiatinus," in *Listen, o Isles, Unto Me. Studies in Medieval Word and Image in Honour of Jennifer O'Reilly*, ed. Elizabeth Mullins and Diarmuid Scully (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011): 115-125, 348-350; Bruce-Mitford, "Decoration and Ornament," 146; Michelle Brown, "The Lindisfarne Scriptorium from the Late Seventh to the Early Ninth Century," in *St Cuthbert, His Cult*, 157.

¹³⁰ Meyvaert, "Bede's *In Esram*," 1107-1113. According to Meyvaert, Bede did not know that the portrait in the *Codex Grandior* was a figure of Cassiodorus because Bede did not have the book of the *Institutiones* in his library. Meyvaert explained that Bede understood that the miniature in the *Codex Grandior* was a portrait of Ezra and made an image of the High Priest for the *Codex Amiatinus*.

both the Amiatinus Ezra and, through an intermediary Gospel book, to the illuminator of the Matthew portrait in the Lindisfarne Gospels.¹³¹

Although all these connections are the result of a speculation based on a lost work, in the facsimile edition of the Lindisfarne Gospels, Bruce-Mitford provided visual support for Meyvaert's theory of the common model. Bruce-Mitford noted that sketches are still visible underneath the paint in Ezra's red skirt and in the wood legs of the bench (fig. 33). The red sketches resembling the shapes of both the pallium and bench as represented in the Lindisfarne Matthew make it plausible that the two illuminations referred to a shared model. Ezra's bench still retain vertical dark lines underneath the paint. Visible through the brown pigment that renders the legs extended in depth, these lines seem to have no specific function in the final version of Amiatinus' bench, but they correspond to the vertical lines in the Matthew's seat (fig. 34). Bruce-Mitford pointed out how the illuminator of the Matthew page could have consulted the Amiatinus model directly, since at the time of the production of the Lindisfarne Gospels, the preparatory drawings in the portrait of Ezra would have been covered with paint.¹³²

The question of finding specific pictorial models is risky. When such models are lost, modern viewers can suggest hypothetical reconstructions, but they are unable to find definite answers. The case of the Lindisfarne Gospels, the Codex Amiatinus, and the lost Cassiodoran model, however, is worthy of further investigation for two main reasons. The first is that while the Codex Amiatinus has been considered in its relationship with the supposed Cassiodoran lost example, the question of the Cassiodoran presence in the Lindisfarne Gospels has not been addressed in depth. The

¹³¹ Meyvaert, "Bede, Cassiodorus, and the Codex Amiatinus," 827-83.

¹³² Bruce-Mitford, "Decoration and Ornament," 146.

second and more important reason is that Cassiodoran interpretation of Scripture and to a wider extent Cassiodorus' philosophical and scientific thought find significant reflection in the iconographies and pictorial rendering of both the Codex Amiatinus and the Lindisfarne Gospels.

There is no conclusive proof that a portrait of Cassiodorus was at hand for the illuminator, but it is safe to believe that he could discern Cassiodoran features in the portrait of Ezra.¹³³ Bruce-Mitford, O'Reilly, Chazelle, and others have pointed out that the figure in the Codex Amiatinus represents the high priest and Cassiodorus simultaneously to reinforce Ezra's role as editor and interpreter of the Scripture.¹³⁴ The Codex Amiatinus portrays Ezra holding a codex and working on the restoration of the Hebrew canon of Scripture following its loss in the destruction of Jerusalem. The Second Book of Ezra describes the event (14:1–18), and the inscription above the portrait records it, writing:

After the sacred books were destroyed by enemy devastation, Ezra, in his zeal for God, restored this work.¹³⁵

Displaying the high priest as Cassiodorus, the miniature emphasizes the hermeneutical work that the two figures performed. As Cassiodorus wrote in the *Institutiones*:

I have gone over all nine codices of divine authority, reading them carefully, after a comparison of ancient codices and previous reading on the part of friends; and in them I admit that with the Lord's help I have worked hard not to lack melodious eloquence and not to mutilate the holy books with rash

¹³³ Chapter 1 in this dissertation.

¹³⁴ Bruce-Mitford, "Decoration and Ornament," 146; O'Reilly, "Library of Scripture," 7-14; Chazelle, "Painting the Voice of God," 49.

¹³⁵ "Codicibus sacris hostilii clade perustis / Esdra Deo fervens hoc reparavit opus"; transliterated, translated, and discussed as Bede's quotation in Scott DeGregorio, *Bede: On Ezra and Nehemiah* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), 229; the bookcase behind Ezra displays nine closed manuscripts with their titles inscribed on their spines. The inscriptions are now visible with difficulty, but Bruce-Mitford was able to transcribe the titles and provide evidence that these books corresponded to the nine codices that Cassiodorus consulted for the interpretation of the Scripture. See Bruce-Mitford, "Decoration and Ornament," 146; O'Reilly, "Library of Scripture," 3-39.

presumption.¹³⁶

The portrait of Ezra in Cassiodorus' traits points to the intellectual effort of maintaining the structural order of the Scripture, because the unity and harmony of the books were evidence of the unique source of the sacred texts. Cassiodorus in the *Institutiones* provided the reader with the literary sources for the elaboration of correct interpretations of the Bible. He pointed to the necessity of studying the literal and the mathematical arts because they reveal the proportion and the structure of sacred texts.

The mathematical instruments featured below Ezra's seat—a measuring rod and a pair of dividers in line with such writers' tool as the ink pot (figs. 16 and 26)—might support the argument of the unity of the testaments by means of the arts listed in the *quadrivium* and the *trivium*, the study of mathematics and letters respectively.¹³⁷ For the identification of Ezra's instruments, a later pictorial tradition provides clues about the function of the long stick that Ezra has at his feet. The ninth-century manuscript in Bamberg containing Boethius' *De Arithmetica* (Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek H. J. IV 12, fol. 9v, fig. 35) portrays the personification of geometry holding a similar rod, which she uses to measure two triangles and a circle.¹³⁸ The

¹³⁶ "Quos ego cunctos novem codices auctoritatis divinae, ut senex potui, sub collatione priscorum codicum amicis ante me legentibus sedula lectione transivi; ubi multum me laborasse Domino iuvante profiteor, quatenus nec eloquentiae modificatae deessem nec libros sacros temeraria praesumptione lacerarem;" in "Praefatio," *Institutiones*, ed. Mynors, p. 8; trans. Leslie W. Jones, *An Introduction to Divine and Human Readings* (Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 71.

¹³⁷ On the iconography of the liberal arts, see Marie-Thérèse D'Alverny, "La Sagesse et Ses Sept Filles: Researches sur les Allégories de la Philosophie et des les Arts Libéraux du IX^e au XII^e Siècle," in *Mélanges Dediés à la Mémoire de Félix Grat*, ed. Émile A. Van Moé, Jeanne Vielliard and Pierre Marot (Paris: Mme. Pecqueur-Grat, 1946), 1:245-278; Adolf Katzenellenbogen, "The Representation of the Seven Liberal Arts," in *Twelfth-century Europe and the Foundations of Modern Society. Proceedings of a Symposium Sponsored by the Division of Humanities of the University of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Institute for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, November 12-14, 1957*, ed. Marshall Clagett, Gaines Post and Robert Reynolds (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), 39-55; Philippe Verdier, "L'Iconographie des Arts Libéraux dans l'Art du Moyen-Âge jusqu'à la Fin du Quinzième Siècle," in *Arts Libéraux et Philosophie au Moyen Age: Actes Congrès International de Philosophie Médiévale* (Montréal: Institut d'Études Médiévales; Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1969), 305-55.

¹³⁸ Köhler, *Die karolingischen Miniaturen. Die Schule von Tours* I (Berlin, 1930), 401; II (1933), 65-67; Margaret Gibson, "Illustrating Boethius: Carolingian and Romanesque Manuscripts," in *Medieval manuscripts of the Latin Classics: Production and Use. Proceedings of the Seminar in the History of*

illumination includes three other female figures representing the disciplines of music, arithmetic, and astronomy. The dividers consist of two pointed sticks joined at the top, and they are used to measure and transfer measurements of length. In the Ezra portrait, the position of the tool next to the ruler makes it plausible that it should be interpreted as a measuring instrument as well.¹³⁹

It would be hazardous to explain the presence of ruler and dividers in the Codex Amiatinus as depicting specific disciplines. It is probable that both tools refer to the idea of numbers and measurements that constitute the fundamental nature of the *quadrivium*. Isidore and Cassiodorus defined the mathematical arts in terms of measuring the geometric shapes, the musical intervals, and eventually the movement of the celestial spheres by quantifying the numbers contained in them.¹⁴⁰ They explained that arithmetic is the measure of numbers by themselves; music is the measure of sounds; astronomy is the measure of stars in movement; geometry is the abstract measure, or the measure of static forms.¹⁴¹ Thus the tools featured at the feet of Ezra point to the intellectual processes that govern the disciplines of the

the Book to 1500, Leiden, 1993, ed. Claudine A. Chavannes-Mazel and Margaret M. Smith (Los Altos Hills: Anderson-Lovelace, 1996), 118-29.

¹³⁹ See the discussion on the role of numbers in the Boethian philosophy in Michael Masi, "Boethius and the Iconography of the Liberal Arts," *Latomus* 33/1 (1974): 57-75; Myra L. Uhlfelder, "The Role of the Liberal Arts in Boethius' Consolation," in *Boethius and the Liberal Arts: A Collection of Essays*, ed. Michael Masi (Bern: Peter Lange, 1981), 17-30; the dividers can be identified in a later pictorial tradition. Produced in the eleventh century, the Tiberius Psalter, and the Royal Bible both included such utensil with scales or trumpets into complex iconographies, see Cochrane, "Where There Is No Time".

¹⁴⁰ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, bk. 2, ch. 24, col. 15, ed. Wallace M. Lindsay; Cassiodorus, *Institutiones*, bk 2, ch. 3, col. 8; on Boethius see the discussion in Masi, *Number Theory*; and Taki Suto, *Boethius on Mind, Grammar, and Logic: A Study of Boethius' Commentaries on Peri Hermeneias* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012).

¹⁴¹ Isidore defines each one of the mathematical fields as *quantitas* meaning size, magnitude, or quantity: Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, bk. 2, ch. 24, col. 15: "Arithmetica est disciplina quantitatis numerabilis secundum se. Geometria est disciplina magnitudinis immobilis et formarum. Musica est disciplina quae de numeris loquitur qui ad aliquid sunt his qui inveniuntur in sonis. Astronomia est disciplina quae cursus coelestium siderumque figuras contemplatur omnes, et habitudines stellarum circa se et circa terram indagabili ratione percurrit"; Isidore's *Etymologiae*, bk. 1, ch. 7, col. 18 also explains that "the quantity is defined by means of measure, like long, short" ("Quantitas, quia mensura trahuntur, ut *longus, brevis*"). The same definitions of the liberal arts appear in Cassiodorus, *Institutiones*, bk. 2, ch. 3, col. 8.

quadrivium. Considered together, ink and ruler could refer to both verbal and numerical arts. This interpretation is consistent with Cassiodorus' treatment of the seven arts as a group for accessing secular and religious texts.

The portrait of Ezra/Cassiodorus in the Codex Amiatinus provides the high priest with a measuring instrument for editing the Scripture. The mathematical instruments were necessary for understanding the arithmetic present in the content of the Bible but also the mathematical organization of the sacred text. Insular exegesis praised the mathematical structure of the Bible. Bede referred to Augustine's authority to explain how the perfect design of the books of the Scripture was the reflection of the order of creation:

Augustine said of the four divisions of Scripture that, in the Church of God, the division has to be fourfold: the Divine Canon, which predicates the future life; History, which transmits the narrative of the events; Numbers, which enumerates the future and solemn divinity; Grammar, which encloses the science of the words. These four divisions are the fundament of Scripture. Isidore in his *Computus* wrote that the numerical reasoning cannot be dismissed. Mathematics enlight the mysteries contained in several passages of the Scripture. Not without reason it is said in the lauds to God: "Thou hast ordered all things in measure, and number, and weight" (Ws 11:21).¹⁴²

God himself conceived the mathematical organization of the Bible ordering the things in measure. Cassiodorus was the best representative of the exegetical tradition that recognized the importance of the mathematical system of the sacred texts, because in the numbers was the demonstration of the text's divine author. For this reason, mathematical reasoning was a metaphor for the mind accessing the depth of the holy Writ.¹⁴³

¹⁴² "Augustinus dixit de quatuor divisionibus scripturae: Quatuor necessaria sunt in Ecclesia Dei: Canon divinus, in quo narratur et praedicatur vita futura; Historia, in qua rerum gesta narrantur; Numerus, in quo facta futurorum et solemnitates divinae dinumerantur; Grammatica, in qua verborum scientia intelligitur. Igitur quatuor sunt partes Scripturae: Canon divinus, Historia, Numerus, Grammatica. Ista autem divisiones sunt quasi Scripturae quatuor fundamenta. Isidorus in Computi laude dicit: Ratio numerorum contemnenda non est. In multis locis sanctarum Scripturarum, quantum mysterium habet, elucet. Non enim frustra in laudibus Dei dictum est: Omnia in mensura et numero et pondere fecisti": Pseudo-Bede, *De Computo Dialogus*, PL 90, cols. 647-648.

¹⁴³ Englisch, *Artes Liberales*, 41-138.

The portrait of Ezra as Cassiodorus emphasizes the editorial work conducted by the high priest by means of mathematical reasoning. Meyvaert and other scholars have discussed at length the reasons for representing the high priest in the features of the Roman statesman. In addition to O'Reilly's arguments about the New Testament contained in the Old, they are to be explained in Ezra's ability to write quickly.¹⁴⁴ Meyvaert and DeGregorio advanced this interpretation, finding support in Bede's commentary on Ezra and Nehemia, in which he provided a description of the high priest as a swift scribe (*scriba velox*).¹⁴⁵ They, however, did not incorporate in their discussions Bede's commentary on the Books of Kings, a text in which Bede provided additional explanations for Ezra's writing speed. The text clarifies that Ezra was praised for his outstanding knowledge of the Scripture and for his project of collecting the texts of the Old Testament, but also because he was able to find the Jewish *schemata* in Scripture before they got lost:

It is written the following: "Ezra came from Babylon, and was a swift writer in the Law of Moses" (1 Esd 7). He was quick, meaning that he was fast in finding the figures of the letters when the Jews still had them.¹⁴⁶

Following Cassiodorus' belief, the image suggests that editing the Scripture implied a process of finding the *schemata* or figures of the letters (*litterarum figuras*). He meant that *tropi* and *schemata* were already in Christian writings.¹⁴⁷ Thus, approaching the sense of the text meant going behind the letter and finding the original mathematical proportion of pure shape. This intellectual activity allows grasping the harmony behind the Scripture.

¹⁴⁴ Meyvaert, "Bede, Cassiodorus, and the Codex Amiatinus," 827-83; idem, "The Date of Bede's *In Ezram*," 1087-1133; Chazelle, "Painting the Voice of God," 15-59.

¹⁴⁵ Bede, *In Ezram*, 2:791-821; Meyvaert, "The Date of Bede's *In Ezram*," 1124; DeGregorio, *Bede: On Ezra*, 230-31.

¹⁴⁶ "Unde scriptum est de eo: Ascendit Ezras de Babylone, et ipse scriba velox in lege Moysis (1 Esd 7). Velox videlicet, quod promptiores litterarum figuras quam eatenus Hebraei habebant repperit": Bede, *In libros Regum Quaestionum xxx Liber Unus*, PL 91, col. 270C.

¹⁴⁷ Cassiodorus, *Institutiones*.

Available to the editor of the Old Testament, the instruments of mathematical knowledge in the Codex Amiatinus seem to represent the idea of measuring as an act: the intellectual act of interpreting. Kessler and Chazelle have pointed out how the diagrams contained in the Codex Amiatinus share the design with diagrams displayed in Cassiodorus' *Institutiones* in the eighth-century manuscript in Bamberg (Staatsbibliothek, Msc. Patr. 61, fol. 15r, fig. 36).¹⁴⁸ The diagrams of the liberal arts, the arts of measuring the order of words and shapes, define the layout of the Codex Amiatinus' divisions of the books of the Bible. By listing the titles of the two Testaments within geometric lines, the diagrams in the Codex Amiatinus show how geometric shapes and *schemata* are fundamental to the structure of the Bible (fol. 7r, fig. 37). This geometrical order that resides in Scripture is consistent with Boethius' and Cassiodorus' philosophical system, which keeps geometry in high consideration because of its closeness to the heavenly organization.¹⁴⁹ They recognized the high status of geometric reasoning as a means for the mind to grasp the nature of things. As Boethius explained, in defining the size of things and figures, geometry was the field of knowledge that could approach the idea of infinity that resides in numbers. While the mind could not understand the meaning of the concept of infinity, geometry allowed the intellect to grasp the ratio behind created things.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ On the manuscript in Bamberg see Gude Suckale-Redlefsen, *Die Handschriften des 8. bis 11. Jahrhunderts der Staatsbibliothek Bamberg* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004), pp. 3-10, 118-32; Kessler, "Images of Christ," 1102-1104; Celia Chazelle, "Christ and the Vision of God: The Biblical Diagrams of the Codex Amiatinus," in *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Anne-Marie Bouché (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 84-111; idem, "The Three Chapters Controversy and the Biblical Diagrams of Cassiodorus' Codex Grandior and *Institutiones*," in *The Crisis of the Oikoumene: The Three Chapters and the Failed Quest for Unity in the Sixth-Century Mediterranean*, ed. Celia Chazelle and Catherine Cubitt (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 161-205; idem, "Painting the Voice of God: The Tabernacle Miniature in the Codex Amiatinus," *Quintana* 8 (2009), 43; see also Carol Farr, "The Shape of Learning at Wearmouth-Jarrow: The Diagram Pages in the Codex Amiatinus," in *Northumbria's Golden Age*, ed. Jane Hawkes and Susan Mills (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), 336-45; Michael Gorman, *The Diagrams of the Oldest Manuscripts of Cassiodorus' Institutiones*, *Revue Bénédictine* 110 (2000), 27-41.

¹⁴⁹ Boethius, *Arithmetica*; Cassiodorus, *Institutiones*.

¹⁵⁰ Boethius, "Divisio Mathematicae," in *Arithmetica*, ch. 1, *PL* 63, cols. 1081B-1082A, *CSEL* 94A; trans. Masi *Boethian Number*, pp. 72-73: "If a searcher is lacking knowledge of these four sciences

Following Scripture, the highly geometrical construction of the Tabernacle in the Codex Amiatinus (fols. 2v-3r, figs. 38 and 39) renders pictorially the belief that mathematical knowledge was preserved in the holiest construction of the Old Testament, and therefore these measurements were important for those who dealt with spiritual knowledge.¹⁵¹ Bede and Cassiodorus followed a medieval tradition that recognized mathematical knowledge in general, and geometry especially, as a form of antique knowledge that was preserved in the constructions and measurements of the Tabernacle and the Temple. Bede explained that Moses constructed the Tabernacle relying on his knowledge of geometry, which he learned from the Egyptians, who demonstrated confidence with sizes and numbers:

The Jews tell that Moses was learned in any science of the Egyptians; he posed the number of cubits in that place following the field of geometry that the Egyptians especially practiced.¹⁵²

The highly geometrical interpretation of the Tabernacle in the Codex Amiatinus would be consistent with the illuminator's intention to render the plan of the

[arithmetic, music, geometry, astronomy], he is not able to find the truth; without this kind of thought, nothing of truth is rightly known. This is the knowledge of those things which truly are; it is their full understanding and comprehension. He who spurns these, the paths of wisdom, does not rightly philosophize. Indeed, if philosophy is the love of wisdom, in spurning these, one has already shown contempt for philosophy. To this I think I should add that every force of a multitude, progressing from one point moves on limitless increases of growth. But a magnitude, beginning with a finite quantity does not receive a new mode of being by division; its name includes the smallest sections of its body. This infinite and unlimited ability of nature in a multitude, philosophy spontaneously rejects. For nothing which is infinite is able to be assembled by a science or to be comprehended by the mind. But reason itself takes this matter of the infinite to itself; in these matters, reason is able to exercise the searching power of truth. It delegates the boundary of finite quantity to the plurality of infinite multitude, and having rejected the aspect of interminable magnitude, it demands in a defined area a cognition of these things on its own behalf." See also Michael Masi, *Boethius and the Liberal Arts*.

¹⁵¹ Constantine of Antioch probably author of the *Christian Topography*, presents the features of the earth following the shape of the Tabernacle, see the text in Wolska-Conus, *Cosmas Indicopleustès*; continuing along this line of thought, Hrabanus Maurus believed that the value of measures, including lines, circles or spheres, and quadrangular shapes were preserved in the Tabernacle: Hrabanus Maurus, "De Geometria," in *De Clericorum Institutione ad Heistulphum Archiepiscopum*, 3:23, PL 107, cols. 401A-C: "Haec igitur disciplina in tabernaculi templique aedificatione servata est, ubi linealis mensurae unius et circuli ac sphaerae atque hemisphaerion, quadrangulae quoque formae, et caeterarum figurarum dispositio habita est: quorum omnium notitia ad spiritalem intellectum non parum adjuvat tractatorem."

¹⁵² "Tradunt autem Hebraei quod Moyses, qui, ut de illo Scriptura dicit, omni sapientia Aegyptiorum eruditus fuit, secundum autem geometriam, quam praecipue Aegyptii colunt, cubitorum numerum in hoc loco posuit." Bede, *In Pentateuchum*, ch. 5, PL 91, col. 222A.

Tabernacle exactly following God's direction to Moses.¹⁵³ Chazelle pointed out that the illuminator followed precisely the description of the Tabernacle in Exodus, omitting just a few details: the implements for the altars, the rings and bars, the basket for bread, the cords to anchor the tent walls and the hangings to the ground (Ex 25:29, 27:3, 19–20, 29:32, 35:11–19). She also pointed to a Jewish source for the illumination of the Tabernacle: Cassiodorus' Latin translation of Josephus' *Antiquities*.¹⁵⁴ Cassiodorus himself explained that a Jew gave him a precise description of the Tabernacle, information that he used for the depiction of the building in the Codex Grandior.¹⁵⁵

The Tabernacle displays the two-dimensional quadrangular plan with the columns and textiles of the building lying flat on the ground, while it highlights the sacred vessels with three dimensions (figs. 38 and 39).¹⁵⁶ The sixth-century *Christian Topography* attributed to Constantine of Antioch and known in the Insular environment reflected on this issue of the two-dimensional *schemata* and the three-dimensional objects in relationship with Christ's incarnation.¹⁵⁷ The *Christian Topography* visualizes the concept that at the opening of the veil, human eyes could

¹⁵³ Meyvaert, "Bede, Cassiodorus," pp. 845–46; Bede, *De Tabernaculo* 2, CCSL 119A, pp. 81–82: "... in qua etiam [pictura] utrique altari et holocausti uidelicet et incensi pedes quattuor fecit quod utrumque eum sicut et tabernaculi et templi positionem a doctoribus Iudaeorum didicisse putamus"; Chazelle, "Painting the Voice of God," 44–59.

¹⁵⁴ Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities*, ed. Jan W. Van Henten, *Judean Antiquities 15: Translation and Commentary* (Boston: Brill, 2014); Chazelle, "Painting the Voice of God," 44.

¹⁵⁵ "Nam et in Veteri Testamento iussit sibi Dominus tabernaculum fieri, cum Israeliticus populus esset in castris, ut velut quaedam domus divina simul moveretur cum mansionibus Hebraeorum. Unde factum est ut fides catholica, quae per Ecclesias toto orbe diffusa est, Dei tabernaculum nuncupetur. De quo etiam et Josephus in libro Antiquitatum tertio, titulo septimo, diligenti narratione disseruit, quod nos fecimus pingi, et in pandectis majoris capite collocari," in Cassiodorus, *Expositio*, Psalm 14:1, CCSL 97, p. 133, lines 38–45.

¹⁵⁶ Caviness, "Images of Divine Order," 99–120.

¹⁵⁷ Wanda Wolska-Conus, *Cosmas Indicopleustès Topographie Chrétienne. Introduction, Texte Critique, Illustration, Traduction and Notes* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1973); Bischoff and Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries*, at p. 320 demonstrate that the *Topography* likely served as a source of the Canterbury biblical commentaries which referred to the author as "*Christianus Historiographus*"; Herbert L. Kessler, "The Codex Barbarus Scaligeri, the 'Christian Topography,' and the Question of Jewish Models of Early Christian Art," in *Between Judaism and Christianity: Art Historical Essays in Honor of Elisheva (Elisabeth) Revel-Neher*, ed. Katrin Kogman-Appel and Mati Meyer (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2009), 139–53.

have approached the third dimension. The tenth-century copy preserved in Florence (Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 9.28), for example, displays on folio 107r the uncovered Tabernacle rendered as a three-dimensional solid (fig. 40). This image comments on the opening of the Tabernacle as explained in the related text; by contrast, the covered Tabernacle on folio 113r is shown in two dimensions with the columns painted flat on the surface (fig. 41). In the Tabernacle of the Codex Amiatinus the plan merges the two-dimensional view with the three-dimensional objects as seen in the two illuminations of the Tabernacle in the *Christian Topography*. The Codex Amiatinus depicts the entrance of the Tabernacle bearing a cross with the inscription *introitus* right below it. The illumination visually interprets the text in the Epistle to the Hebrews (10:19–20), which likens Christ’s incarnation to the faithful’s entering the Tabernacle through the living veil, that is, Christ’s flesh.¹⁵⁸ The image shows that the Tabernacle refers to a time after Christ’s incarnation and displays how the Word made flesh opened the possibility of seeing through the curtain spiritually. Uncovering the Tabernacle to all, the illumination reveals how the possibility of seeing God could have gained a physical, three-dimensional appearance. The third dimension of the *vasa sacra* is also visible in the *Maiestas* composition (fol. 796v, fig. 42), where the image of Christ, as well as those of the cherubim and the Evangelists, are rendered in their corporeal features and shaded garments.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Heb 10:19–20: “Habentes itaque, fratres, fiduciam in introitu sanctorum in sanguine Christi, quam initiavit nobis viam novam, et viventem per velamen, id est, carnem suam”; see Bianca Kühnel, “Jewish Symbolism of the Temple and the Tabernacle and Christian Symbolism of the Holy Sepulchre and the Heavenly Tabernacle: A Study of Their Relationship in Late Antique and Early Medieval Art and Thought,” *Jewish Art* 12-13 (1986-87), 166.

¹⁵⁹ Celia Chazelle, “Painting the Voice of God: The Tabernacle Miniature in the Codex Amiatinus,” *Quintana* 8 (2009): 44-46; see also Elisabeth Revel-Neher, “Du Codex Amiatinus et ses Rapports avec les Plans du Tabernacle dans L’Art Juif et dans l’Art Byzantin,” *Journal of Jewish Art* 9 (1982): 6-17; Bianca Kühnel, *From the Earthly to the Heavenly Jerusalem: Representations of the Holy City in Christian Art of the First Millennium* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1987), 105-09, 124-25; eadem, “Jewish Symbolism of the Temple and the Tabernacle and Christian Symbolism of the Holy Sepulchre and the Heavenly Tabernacle: A Study of their Relationship in Late Antique and Early Medieval Art and Thought,” *Jewish Art* 12-13 (1987): 147-68.

The tools of the liberal arts are visible in the Ezra portrait; they reappear in the illumination of the Tabernacle not much as tools, but rather as mathematical language that the illuminator used for the features of God's dwelling place. Unifying the letters to the geometric constructions, the page displays the subjects of the liberal arts: the perfection of the words taught by the *trivium* is joined with the things whose nature was explained by the *quadrivium*. Friederich Ohly pointed out how the medieval understanding of the spiritual sense of letters intended the letters and words as if they were things.¹⁶⁰ The Tabernacle points to the liberal arts as activating hermeneutic processes that Christians could access at the rending of the veil. Because Christ was the Word and its incarnation, the understanding of the letters and words did not refer to the material things only, but also to the heavenly meanings. This idea was at the basis of the anagogical value of material images that the Codex Amiatinus exposes. The Tabernacle in the Codex Amiatinus engages with the human desire of seeing God by means of the bird's-eye view of the building. The Tabernacle is seen from above; such a point of view implies that God is watching from heaven, as it is told, for instance, in Deuteronomy (26:15) and the Psalms (14:2; 33:13–14; 53:2; 80:14; 102:19).¹⁶¹ Commenting on the Psalms, Cassiodorus explained that when God looks down from heaven, his sight elicits the human intellectual excitement:

The Lord hath espied from heaven, and hath looked on all the sons of men. Here the future coming of the Lord is explained by the figure which in Greek is called *idea* and in Latin *species*; when we set before our eyes the representation, so to say, of a future event, and stir out mental aspiration towards an eagerness to listen.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Ohly, *Sensus Spiritualis*.

¹⁶¹ "Look down from heaven, your holy dwelling place, and bless your people Israel and the land you have given us as you promised on oath to our forefathers, a land flowing with milk and honey"; Dt 26:15; see also Pss 14:2; 33:13–14; 53:2; 80:14; 102:19.

¹⁶² "'De coelo prospexit Dominus, et vidit omnes filios hominum.' Hic adventus Domini futuris exprimitur per figuram quae Graece *idea*, Latine *species* dicitur: quando velut effigiem rei futurae oculis offerentes, animi votum ad audiendi studium concitamus": Cassiodorus, *Expositio*, Psalm 32:13, CCSL 97, p. 289, line 245; trans. Patrick G. Walsh, p. 320.

Hearing the divine voice, but not seeing the future event would make the soul desire the invisible image of the divine. The Tabernacle in the Codex Amiatinus visually renders the human attempt to see the Tabernacle through God's eyes, thus implying that the soul fails to see the features of the Lord. Christians can see Christ's features in the illumination of the *Maiestas*. In miniature of the Tabernacle the beholder can access with his senses the geometric forms of God's dwelling as well as the things that he ordered Moses to make with his hands. The Word of God is still a voice ordering the measurements of the Tabernacle. His image cannot be seen.

These arguments provided by the Codex Amiatinus allow us to reanalyze the geometrical construction of the Evangelist portraits in the Lindisfarne Gospels and establish a deeper connection between the portraits of the high priest Ezra and the Evangelist Matthew behind their iconographical resemblance.

The Geometric shapes in the Matthew and John Portraits

The instruments of mathematical knowledge that appear at the feet of Ezra are not featured in the portrait of the Evangelist Matthew, but the illuminator used mathematical tools to build the pictorial space. The Evangelist's halo and codex take the shapes of circles and rectangles. The Matthew page, along with the other Evangelist portraits, seems to construct the objects on the basis of such medieval mathematical treatises as Boethius' text on arithmetic, which describes the geometrical forms as generated and composed by numbers organized and circumscribed within the space.¹⁶³

The shapes of Matthew's seat and footstool might be interpreted by means of

¹⁶³ Boethius, *De Arithmetica*, ch.1, trans. Michael Masi, pp. 71- 75, at 74: " at p. 131: "Such is unity in number: it is not itself a linear number, but it is the principle for extending a number into the dimension of width."

surfaces and solids as described by Boethius in his mathematical writings and especially in his translation of Euclid (fig. 43).¹⁶⁴ Boethius explained that three dimensions are constructed as extensions of numbers into space; thus, numbers belonged to lines, squared numbers to surfaces, and cubic numbers to solids.¹⁶⁵ The multiplication of numerical intervals created the three dimensions: length, height, and width. A plane figure had length and height. Matthew's footstool is close to Boethius' description of surface in its visual rendering and main characteristics as well (fig. 43). The footstool is quadrangular and extends in two dimensions, length and height (fig. 44). Matthew's feet are painted over the quadrangular surface; they evoke Boethius' note about the origin of the word surface. The philosopher explained that the Greeks called the surface "*epipedon*," and the Latins translated it with "foot."¹⁶⁶ Even though it is quite common to paint feet on a footstool, the Evangelist Matthew assumes a awkward position so that his feet cover the extension of the footstool, virtually

¹⁶⁴ "De mensura et tribus dimensionibus rubrica. Quamvis etiam in superioris libri principio quid mensura designaremus, libet tamen specialiter hujus artis speculatoribus satisfaciendo secundum Julium Frontinum geometricae artis inspectorem providissimum quid sit mensura definire. Mensura quippe est complurium, et inter se aequalium intervallorum longitudo finita, geometricae autem artis mensuralis speculatio, trinae dimensionis, id est longitudinis, latitudinis, crassitudinis, consideratione colligitur. Et ut enucleatius resolvatur, recto, plano solidoque dinoscitur. Rectum est quod longitudine solum mensurando censetur, ut lineae porticus, stadia milliaria, fluminum latitudines, et alia quamplura longa protensione directa, ut lineae infra depictae descriptio notat," in *Euclidis Megarensis Geometriae Libri Duo ab Anicio Manlio Severino Boetio Translati*, PL 63, cols. 1336D-1337B. The extent of the transmission of Euclid's writings is matter of debate because only portions of the *Elements* are preserved in early medieval manuscripts; see Menso Folkerts, "The Importance of the Pseudo-Boethian *Geometria* during the Middle Ages," in *Boethius and the Liberal Arts. A Collection of Essays*, ed. Michael Masi (Bern; Frankfurt am Main; Las Vegas: Peter Lang, 1981), 187-209; Wesley M. Stevens, "Euclidean Geometry in the Early Middle Ages: A Preliminary Reassessment," in *Villard's Legacy*, 229-263. Euclid's name and works, however, were known. Bede and Hrabanus Maurus mentioned his writings on optics and the *Elements*. See Bede, *De Temporum Ratione*, ch. 26, ed. Thomas Mommsen, CCSL 123B, pp. 359-62; Hrabanus Maurus, *De Universo*, ch. 2, PL 111, col. 333C. Cassiodorus in his *Institutiones*, 2:6, PL 70, col. 1213D, mentioned Boethius' translation of Euclid's *Geometry*; also he applied Euclid's geometrical theories in the *Expositio*, Psalm 1, CCSL 97, p. 29, lines 82-93; and Psalm 95, CCSL 98, p. 869, lines 331-33; Euclid's theories about lines, surfaces, and solids considered in this chapter are explained in the *Institutiones*. See Cassiodorus, "De Geometria," in *Institutiones*, ed. Roger Mynors (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1937), 2:6, pp. 150-52.

¹⁶⁵ Boethius, "De Mensura et Tribus Dimensionibus Rubrica," in *Euclidis*, bk 2, PL 63, cols. 1336D-1337C; Michael Masi, *Boethian Number Theory* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1983), 64.

¹⁶⁶ "Planum est quod a Graecis dicitur *epipedon*, a nobis autem contracti pedes," in Boethius, "Euclidis," PL 63, col. 1337B.

measuring it.

Next to the surface of the footstool, the illuminator painted the third dimension in Matthew's seat. The structure is comparable to what manuscripts containing Isidore of Seville's *De natura rerum* represented and described as a solid (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, fol. 15r, fig. 45).¹⁶⁷ In Boethius' mathematical writings, the third dimension was intended as a formal construction but was also conceived in terms of the immaterial concept of perfection. The highest and most perfect harmony could be reached by means of three dimensions.¹⁶⁸ According to Boethius, music had the highest power in engaging with the idea of stability and perfection provided by three intervals, meaning the distance between points or sounds: three intervals could perpetuate the harmonic proportion.¹⁶⁹ This is why, translating the argument from sounds to forms, Boethius pointed to the cube as the perfect solid. The idea of the numerical harmony evoked by music is consistent with visual features in the Gospels. The trumpet played by Matthew's angel is painted on the same axis as the three-dimensional seat. The harmony of the Evangelists' texts in musical fashion is alluded to as well in the Canon Tables (fig. 46). They refer to the Evangelists by writing numbers in the arches, instead of the more traditional use of writing their names or

¹⁶⁷ See also the seventh- and eighth-century manuscripts of Isidore of Seville preserved in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale: Nat. Lat. 6400G, folio 4v, and Nat. Lat. 6413, see Esmeijer, *Divina Quaternitas*, 38-39.

¹⁶⁸ Boethius, *De Arithmetica*, bk. 2, ed. Heinrich Oosthout and Iohannis Schilling CCSL 94a (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 93-226; Masi, *Boethian Number*, 122; on music engaging with the concept of harmony see Karl Morrison, "Know Thyself," 369-480; Herbert L. Kessler, "Images of Christ and Communication with God," in *Comunicare e Significare nell'Alto Medioevo*. Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo 52 (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2005), 2:1114-15; on the Boethian musical theory, see Michael Masi, "Manuscripts Containing the *De Musica* of Boethius," *Manuscripta* (1971): 89-95.

¹⁶⁹ In music the interval is the difference between two pitches, in mathematics the interval is the difference between numbers, in geometry the interval is the distance between points; see Boethius, "De Maxima et Perfecta Symphonia, Quae Tribus Distenditur Intervallis," in *De Arithmetica*, 2:54, CCSL 94A, pp. 221-22: "Restat ergo de maxima perfectaue harmonia disserere, quae tribus intervallis constituta, magnam vim obtinet in musici modulaminis temperamentis et in speculatione naturalium quaestionum. Etenim perfectius huiusmodi medietate nihil poterit inveniri, quae tribus intervallis producta perfectissimi corporis naturam substantiamque sortita est. Hoc enim modo, cybum quoque trina dimensione crassatum, plenam armoniam esse monstravimus"; trans. Michael Masi, pp. 185-86.

painting their symbols, and they organize the readings into diagrams of such musical concordances as the diatessaron or the diapason (fig. 47).

The idea of order provided by numbers is prevalent throughout the manuscript. The illuminations display how geometry, intended as organization of the numbers in space, was a leading knowledge in the construction of shapes. The layout of the five carpet pages, for example, exposes the climax of this process by showing pure mathematical principles in their aniconic ornament (figs. 5–9). The Evangelist portraits similarly prompt the viewer to interpret the illuminations in terms of geometrical constructions; the benches in the Matthew (fig. 44) and the John portraits (fig. 48) are telling examples. In both pictures the solids seem to be constructed of juxtaposed quadrangles, making visible even sides of the objects that should be hidden if they were material things in the real space. As a result, the seats seem both to extend in depth and to simultaneously lie flat on the parchment. The process is explicit in Matthew's seat; the right side of the seat is painted in continuity with the flat footstool. The two front wood legs touch the frame, giving the impression they should be flat on the same level of the red border of the page, while the rest of the seat extends into the space behind the frame.

The seats of the Evangelists Matthew and John display dots, lines, and surfaces that simultaneously appear as both individual signs and part of the solid. Although these geometric constructions look unfamiliar to the modern viewers, they reflect the contemporary understanding of the solids as extensions of the number. A visual representation of the geometric shapes as organizations of number in space can be found in manuscripts containing Boethius' mathematical theories, such as the manuscript in Bamberg (Staatsbibliothek, HJ IV 12, fol. 84v, fig. 49), which shows

triangles and quadrangles with the surfaces composed of repeating number Ones.¹⁷⁰

The wooden legs are material three-dimensional objects but also rectangles. Dots and lines embellish them, displaying virtually all the geometrical elements of solids as discussed by Boethius in his philosophical and mathematical treatises. In light of contemporary geometrical knowledge, the quadrangular seats displaying dots and surfaces within the same solid provide a representation of the ways in which the object itself was constructed by multiplying a series of numbers or dots. As Boethius explained it, the dot is the principle of the measurement:

measure is the circumscription of the value of anything in terms of weight, length, volume, height, width, and breath. The principle of measurement is called the dot. The dot is something that cannot be divided. The lines in length or width are indeed limited series of dots.¹⁷¹

The benches in the portraits of Matthew and John display the ways in which dots fill the surfaces and surfaces construct solids. The illuminator painted the solids on the basis of the concept of measure that is the extension of an intelligible principle within a geometrical economy.

At first it would be plausible to think that the illuminator was not accurate in creating the third dimension of the solids. But this hypothesis needs to be reconsidered because there were reasons for such visual construction. The seats in the John and Matthew portraits embody the dimensions of length, width and height, and they evoke the substance of the divine by pointing to the property of geometry to contain the dot, that is the principle or the number, within a circumscribed solid that is a multitude of numbers. The possibility of evoking the principle within the infinite

¹⁷⁰ Gibson, "Illustrating Boethius," 118-29; for the translation of the text see Masi, *Boethian Number*.

¹⁷¹ "Mensura vero est quidquid pondere, capacitate, longitudine, animoque finitur. Principium autem mensurae punctum vocatur. Punctum est, cuius pars nulla est. Linea vero sive latitudine longitudo est, lineae vero fines puncta sunt." Boethius, "De Mensura" in *Euclidis*, bk. 1, *PL* 63, col. 1307A; Cassiodorus used the same definition in the *Institutiones*, bk. 2, ch. 6:14-15.

was the theological reason that made Paul express the desire of knowing God in mathematical terms:

You may be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth: to know also the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge, that you may be filled unto all the fulness of God (Eph 3:18–19)¹⁷²

The philosophical reason by which the knowledge of God should imply the understanding of mathematical measurements relied on the ineffable idea of substance. Describing the concept of substance, Boethius made clear that its immutable nature could be expressed only in measurements:

The three dimensions, the number, and the continuity of the space are dimensions, or quantities. Length, height, and width are measured in quantities, while the color white is a quality [...] Other reasons make the dimension similar to the substance. Substance does not imply a contrary; substance cannot be greater or smaller, and similarly dimension cannot be greater or smaller. Quality accepts contraries, for example: white and black, bigger and smaller, brighter and darker, the brightest and the darkest. Quality implies the possibility of being diminished.¹⁷³

Dimensions did not imply a contrary. For this reason, length, height, and width could not be modified or altered. Especially in the controversies against the Arians, the equal substance of Father and Son was rendered by means of height and length. The argument maintained that Christ and the Father had equal dimensions because, by their nature, measurements could not increase or diminish. In the fourth century, Marius Victorinus demonstrated the concept with these words:

When did he (God) exist? Before he was made flesh: he said, taking the shape of a servant. He was before taking human shape. And what was him? The

¹⁷² “Ut possitis comprehendere cum omnibus sanctis, quae sit latitudo, et longitudo, et sublimitas, et profundum: Scire etiam supereminentem scientiae caritatem Christi, ut impleamini in omnem plenitudinem Dei.”

¹⁷³ “Sed tres dimensiones et numero et continuatione spatii quantitates sunt. Longitudo enim et latitudo et altitudo in quantitatibus numerantur, album vero qualitatis est... Item alia causa, quod quantitas plura habet substantiae consimilia: nam quemadmodum substantiae nihil est contrarium, et substantia non recipit magis et minus, sic etiam quantitas: quantitati enim nihil est contrarium, nec quantitas recipit magis et minus, ut paulo post docebimus; qualitas vero et contraria suscipit, ut album et nigrum, et magis et minus, ut candidius et nigrius, et candidissimum et nigerrimum; id enim sumit intentionem quod potest sumere diminutionem,” in “De Quantitate,” *In Categorias Aristotelis*, bk. 2, PL 64, cols. 202B–D.

λόγος of God, God's shape. How was he equal to God? He was consubstantial with God: he said to be equal, meaning that he is declared equal in dimension and quantity: the dimension of the substance is the same as the dimension of the grain. To the contrary, quality has no dimension, neither quality exists because of its substance. We can define the substance through dimension only. As St. Paul said, the substance of God can be expressed in quantity only (Eph 3:18): "to grasp the height, length, width, and depth of God."¹⁷⁴

The terms dimension and equality recurred in arguments about the consubstantial Son and Father overcoming the limit of time. Cassiodorus also considered the idea and put it briefly:

Since the Son is eternal and before time, [against the Arians] they predicated he is equal (*aequi*) in substance with the Father.¹⁷⁵

The idea of dimensions engaging with the nature of God might be employed in the geometrical constructions of the furniture of the Evangelists Matthew and John because they testified that at the Incarnation the Word was made flesh while maintaining his divine nature.

Augustine, in his treatises on John, explained the theological concept of the Word made flesh by turning to the geometrical dimensions. He did so to bring into argument the corporeal images and their impossibility of bridging the mind to the equality of the Father and the Son. For Augustine, the geometrical extensions of length, height, and width were properties of the material images that made it impossible for the mind to grasp the concept of the equality of the Father to the Son:

As far as the form of God is concerned, in which he is equal to the Father, if we should wish to understand his words, "I will that where I am they also may be with me," according to it, let all thought of corporeal images depart from

¹⁷⁴ "Quando existens? Antequam veniret in corpus: dixit enim, quod exinaniverit se ipsum et acceperit formam servi: erat igitur et antequam homo fieret. Et qualis erat? λόγος Dei, forma Dei. Quid est istud, aequalis existens Deo? Quod est ejus ipsius et potentiae substantiae: dixit enim aequalem esse. Etenim aequale et magnitudinis, et quantitatis est declarativum: magnitudo autem substantiae molis magnitudo est, qualitas enim non habet magnitudinem, neque a substantia quod est esse habet. Solum autem quantum substantiae, magnitudine quantum est. Et idcirco declarans beatus Paulus Dei substantiam, omnia quanta dicit (Eph 3:18): 'Ut Dei cognoscatis altitudinem, longitudinem, latitudinem, profundum,'" in *Adversus Arium*, bk. 1, *PL* 8, col. 1055C.

¹⁷⁵ "Quoniam aeternum et ante saecula Filium, et cum Patre aequi honoris eiusdemque substantiae praedicabant;" in "Epistola Aarii ad Eusebium," in *Historia Ecclesiastica Tripartita*, 1:15, ed. Waltarius Jacob and Rudolphus Hanslik, *CSEL* 71 (Vienna: Hoelder Pichler Tempsky, 1952), p. 70, lines 44-45.

the mind. Whatever will occur to the mind as long, broad, thick, colored by any material brightness whatsoever, spread through any extension of place whatsoever, whether limited or unlimited, from all these, as far as possible let [the mind] turn away the focus of its contemplation or concentration.¹⁷⁶

Augustine was skeptical about the use of images. What matters in his argument in relationship with the portrait of John is that the corporeal images occur to the mind by means of the geometrical dimensions of length, height, and width, and these geometrical elements appear as characteristics of corporeal images that distract the soul from focusing the attention on the divine. Subverting the Augustinian interpretation of the Gospel of John, the miniature of the same Evangelist in the Lindisfarne Gospels presents and unifies the geometrical dimensions to the concept of equality expressed in the inscription *imago aequilae*, but it shows it in painting, thus bringing the role of pictorial arts directly into the argument of the soul that approaches the nature of the divine.¹⁷⁷

Only a century after the illuminator was at work at Lindisfarne, the geometrical construction of the solid made of surfaces and dots found a place in the defense of images, explaining that material images contain the multitude—or infinity—and the unity altogether. Because of this property, images had the capacity to point to the unity of the soul, and eventually of God. Considering the elements for shaping material images joined together as a whole body, Paulinus of Aquileia compared the soul to the lines or dots that construct surfaces, solids, and quadrangular

¹⁷⁶ Augustine, “Tractatus CXI,” in *Tractate in John*, PL 35: “Quod vero attinet ad formam Dei in qua aequalis est Patri, si secundum eam velimus intelligere quod dictum est, Volo ut ubi ego sum, et illi sint mecum; abscedat ab animo omnis imaginum corporalium cogitatio: quidquid menti occurrerit longum, latum, crassum, qualibet luce corporea coloratum, per quaelibet locorum spatia vel finita, vel infinita diffusum, ab his omnibus, quantum potest, aciem suae contemplationis vel intentionis avertat.”

¹⁷⁷ The inscription for the eagle of John writes *imago aequilae* instead of the common spelling *aquilae*. We have seen that the word *aequi* might refer to the root of the word *aequitas*. The Evangelist who more than others had seen and written about the Word with God beyond time demonstrated that the Word was at the beginning, and therefore, equal to the Father: see Chapter 1 in this dissertation.

figures.¹⁷⁸ Dots and lines are one and indivisible thing with the solid, in such a way they are individual dots and lines but also the solid or figure they belong to. Similarly, the immaterial soul is unified with the body, since the soul needs bodily senses for seeing the material world. Paulinus concluded the argument by comparing material images to the soul, simultaneously corporeal and incorporeal, and finally to the consubstantial Son and Father, at once man and God.¹⁷⁹ It is evidently not possible to read the Carolingian texts to understand the geometrical construction of the portrait of John. The cited text attests to a tradition in which the geometrical construction of shapes as extensions of numbers worked as a metaphor for the mind approaching the ineffable divinity within the limited space of the pictorial surface.

The quadrangular seat in the portrait of John may be a means for interpreting measures in material images as engaging with the ineffable nature of God. The process of exposing dots, letters, shapes, and flat and corporeal objects at once is

¹⁷⁸ In 824, Paulinus of Aquileia, recording how the Council of Frankfurt supported images in reaction to the Adoptionism, explained this concept by means of solids, lines, and dots: “Let us put, for example, the discussion about material images according to the disposition of human reason, because this is necessary over any accusation. Lines are in surfaces and solids, and dots are in quadrangles in a way they cannot be unraveled or divided; therefore they perfectly paint the dimension of figures. They unify the sum of the multitude of numbers; proceeding up to the infinite multitude, and returning back to the one, they contain the indivisible unity.” Latin text in in Johannes Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum* (Graz: Akademische Druck und Verlagsanstalt, 1960), 13:880B: “Ponamus igitur, exempli causa, secundum humanae rationis affectum, necessitate super omnia compellente, materialia themata disputandi. Nam sicut in planis et solidis figuris linea, et in quadrangulis punctus, licet sint indissecabiles et dividi nequeant, et idcirco egregie depingant dimensionum figuras; omnium tamen numerorum multitudinis summam in se sociatam retinent, et ex se usque ad infinitam numerositatem procedentes, et rursus in se usque ad unum recurrentes, individuum retinere probantur unionis censuram.”

¹⁷⁹ Paulinus of Aquileia, *Libellus Sacrosyllabus Contra Elipandum Concilii Francofordiensis Anno 794 Decreto Missus ad Provincias Hispaniae*, PL 99:161B-C; “Fingamus igitur animam in forma corporis, quasi lineam, vel punctum in planis, solidis, atque quadrangulatis figuris cunctas membrorum partium in se individue continentes positiones, unumquodque in junctura sua insertum, ita ut et unum sit et diversum. Nam si subtrahas lineam, et punctum aequalitatis, nobilitas degeneratur figurae. Instante autem lineae jacentis primordio, punctique circumfusa numeri quadratura, quique segregari, vel non segregari possunt, resolvi insolubili sectione in lineae punctique privilegio demonstratur. Ita sane vis animae, cum sit incorporea et invisibilis, nec dividi potest, nec recipit sectionum scissuras; totam tamen corporis molem, quae dividi vel segregari potest, in se continentem mirabiliter regit, et per totum diffusa animando vivificat, et quasi punctus in medio suam individue retinet dignitatem, et in alienam non resolvitur qualitatem. Nam, sicut dictum est, cum sit incorporea, corporaliter cuncta per corpus disponit: et cum sit substantia carnis corporea, per incorpoream creaturam, id est animam, corporeas perficit actiones,” in “Libellus,” PL 99: 161C-162C.

characteristic of the manuscript as a whole. The geometric economy of the five carpet pages highlights the value of geometric measurements in painting the crosses. The Matthew carpet page (fig. 6) displays a cross extended up to the limit of the frame, representing what was described as the third dimension of the cross, or the highest possibility of knowledge of God. Discussing the soul approaching the knowledge of the cross, Commentaries on the Epistle to the Ephesians (Eph 3:18–19) also made clear that a fourth dimension was in the nature of God, thus implying that human reason cannot grasp the divine entirely.¹⁸⁰ All the Evangelist portraits in the Lindisfarne Gospels while exposing arguments about material images also point to the impossibility of seeing. The layout of the portraits, we have seen, focuses on the empty codex or scroll, reminding the viewer that pictorial arts consist of visible objects as means for perceiving the invisible.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ See for example, Jerome, *Pauli Apostoli Incipit Epistola ad Ephesios*, PL 29, cols. 780D-781A; on the dimensions of the cross see, for instance, Jerome/Augustine, *In Marci Evangelium*, chap. 15, PL 30, cols. 638A-B; the fourth dimension of the cross is hidden to human eyes, see Augustine: “In charitate radicati et fundati possumus comprehendere cum omnibus sanctis, quae sit latitudo, et longitudo, et altitudo, et profundum, id est, crucem Domini: cuius latitudo dicitur in transverso ligno, quo extenduntur manus; longitudo, a terra usque ad ipsam latitudinem, quo a manibus et infra totum corpus affigitur; altitudo, a latitudine sursum usque ad summum, cui adhaeret caput; profundum vero, quod terrae infixum absconditur. Quo signo crucis, omnis actio christiana describitur, bene operari in Christo, et ei perseveranter inhaerere, sperare coelestia, sacramenta non profanare. Per hanc actionem purgati valebimus cognoscere etiam supereminentem scientiae charitatem Christi, qua aequalis est Patri, per quem facta sunt omnia, ut impleamur in omnem plenitudinem Dei (Eph 3:17–19),” in *De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. Klaus-Detlef Daur and Joseph Martin, 2:41, CCL 32 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992), p. 75.

¹⁸¹ See for example: “A carnalibus ad spiritualia, a visibilibus ad invisibilia possint animum suspendere, et superna conspiciere, sicut et Apostolus dicit: Invisibilia enim Dei per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta conspiciuntur,” in Bede, “Prologue,” in *De Substantiis*, PL 90, cols. 113B-C; the expression *visibilia ad invisibilia* entered the debate on images, see Pope Hadrian I’s letter to Charlemagne, so-called *Hadrianum* 25 (56.11-14). In the early ninth century, these ideas were formulated in councils regarding pictorial arts. In 824, the Council of Paris explained how signs could be meaningful for Christians, but not for Jews. The council continued explaining that the Christian freedom resided in the possibility of interpreting signs; spiritual seeing pointed to the hermeneutic process of seeing the object and the meaning as linked (*signa pro rebus*), the body of Christ and his divinity as belonging to one God. The concept was developed in the context of the debate of images as presented in the Council of Frankfurt in 824, see Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum*, 14:9, cols. 440-41.

Chapter 3

Visual Ambiguities in the Carpet Pages

Introduction: The Carpet Pages and the Origin of Their Name

Together with the Evangelist portraits discussed in the previous two chapters, the Lindisfarne Gospels includes geometric and zoomorphic ornament covering five pages of the codex. The first ornamental page introduces Jerome's letter to Pope Damasus (fig. 5), while the other four follow each of the Evangelist portraits and introduce the text of their respective Gospels (figs. 6–9).¹⁸² Because of their position at the beginning of each Gospel, these ornamental pages have been interpreted as luxurious textiles that unveil the Gospels and function as apotropaic devices.¹⁸³ The connection between carpet pages and Gospels is signified by similar ornament also to be found in such Gospel books as the seventh-century Book of Durrow (Dublin, Trinity College Library, MS A.4.5.57, fol. 192v, fig. 50), the eighth-century Gospels in Lichfield Cathedral, the eighth-century Gospel Book preserved in Augsburg (University Library, Cod. I, 2.4.2, fol. 167v, fig. 51), and the early ninth-century Book of Kells (Dublin, Trinity College Library, MS A.I.58, fol. 33r, fig. 52). This second section of the present study takes as its task to explore further the meanings and functions of the ornamental pages as embellishment of the Gospels; it explores

¹⁸² On the construction of the carpet pages the bibliography is vast. Among others, see George Bain, *Celtic Art: The Methods of Construction* (Glasgow: W. Maclellan, 1951); Bruce-Mitford, *Codex Lindisfarnensis*, 221; Jacques Guilmain, "The Geometry of the Cross-Carpet Page in the Lindisfarne Gospels," *Speculum* 62/1 (1987): 21-52; Robert Stevick, *The Earliest Irish and English Bookarts: Visual and Poetic Forms before A.D. 1000* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994) Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society*, 319.

¹⁸³ Lawrence Nees, "A Fifth-century Book Cover and the Origin of the Four Evangelist Symbols Page of the Book of Durrow," *Gesta* 17 (1978): 3–8; Ernst Kitzinger, "Interlace and Icons: Form and Function in Early Insular Art," in *The Age of Migrating Ideas*, 3-15.

the ways in which the ornament mimics textiles and enamels to celebrate their material qualities in relationship with the paradox of the Living Word.

In all the mentioned ornamental pages the interlace and geometric patterns fill the space delimited in a quadrangular frame that nearly covers the entire surface. Since the earliest publications on the Lindisfarne Gospels, the general layout of these pages has reminded scholars of the colored surfaces of rugs.¹⁸⁴ Making this attractive connection between carpets and illuminations, scholars called these ornamental designs “carpet pages,” and the name became the traditional label for the full-page ornament that decorates the Lindisfarne Gospels and a few other manuscripts containing the narrative of Christ’s life. The validity of such visual comparisons between fictive and material textiles is ultimately something we cannot confirm because no carpets from the eighth-century Insular environment survive.¹⁸⁵ However, exploring the meaning of this resemblance, Michelle Brown advanced the hypothesis that the painters sought to depict in Gospel books the prayer mats actually used for devotional practice.¹⁸⁶ As Brown explained, an eighth-century *ordo* adapted from Roman use for use north of the Alps provides evidence that in the British Isles,

¹⁸⁴ Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society*, 319. Textiles have a meaningful relationship with other media, manuscripts especially; see Odile Blanc, *Textes et Textiles du Moyen Âge à Nos Jours* (Lyon: ENS Éditions: Institut d’Histoire du Livre, 2008). The production of textiles has been explored in several publications especially by Leonie Von Wilkens, *Die textilen Künste: Von der Spätantike bis um 1500* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1991); and Anna Muthesius, *Studies in Silk in Byzantium* (London: Pindar Press, 2004); on mimicked textiles see John Osborne, “Textiles and Their Painted Imitations in Early Medieval Rome,” *Papers of the British School at Rome* 60 (1992): 309-55; Stephen M. Wagner, “Silken Parchments. Design, Context, Patronage and Function of Textile-Inspired Pages in Ottonian and Salian Manuscripts,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Delaware, 2004); Anna Bücheler, “Veil and Shroud: Eastern References and Allegoric Functions in the Textile Imagery of a Twelfth-century Gospel Book from Braunschweig,” *The Medieval History Journal* 15 (October 2012): 269-97; on textiles in their theological and anthropological function see Kessler, “Through the Temple Veil”; Wolf, *Schleier und Spiegel*.

¹⁸⁵ Catalogues of Insular textiles in Gale Owen-Crocker, Elizabeth Coatsworth and Maria Hayward, *Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress and Textiles of the British Isles, c. 450-1450* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012).

¹⁸⁶ Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society*, 319-21; eadem, *The Painted Labyrinth. The World of the Lindisfarne Gospels* (London: British Library, 2003), 24.

following a Near-Eastern fashion, prayer mats were used to kneel before the cross when it was kissed.¹⁸⁷

The interpretation of the ornamental pages as carpets painted in Gospel books, however, poses questions to the beholder who scrutinizes the illuminations. Although the general layout of the pages resembles pieces of textile, the geometric ornament mimics other materials. If we look at some details of the Jerome carpet page, for example, we see interlace covering the background along with precious inlays that mimic reflective or transparent materials such as metal and glass (fig. 5).¹⁸⁸ The effect is visible throughout the five carpet pages, and in such instances as the Mark carpet page, the inlays seem to echo specific works of art. The central circle, as Janet Backhouse and Michelle Brown have noted, represents a colored glass surface with geometric patterns comparable to the clasps of the Sutton Hoo treasures decorated with stepped cloisonné garnets and millefiori insets (London, British Museum, M&ME 1939,10-10,4 and 10,5, fig. 53).¹⁸⁹ Although the illuminator's practice of using paint to refer to other media is a phenomenon well known to scholars, the reasons and the meanings of this process of material simulation have not been explored in depth.¹⁹⁰ Rather, the description of interlace has been divorced from the study of fictive metalwork and enamels on parchment. As a consequence of this

¹⁸⁷ Michel Andrieu, *Les Ordines Romani du Haut Moyen Age* (Leuven: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1948) vol. 2, ordo 24:30, p. 293: "Posito ante eam oratorio, venit pontifex et adoratum deosculatur crucem, deinde episcopi, presbyteri, diaconi et ceteri per ordinem, deinde populus."

¹⁸⁸ Eric Palazzo, "Le Livre dans les Trésors du Moyen-Âge. Contribution à l'Histoire de la Memoria Médiévale," in *Annales, Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 52 (1997): 93-118.

¹⁸⁹ Rupert L. S. Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial* (London: The British Museum Press, 1978), 2:523-35 and 584-89; Backhouse, *The Lindisfarne Gospels*, 71; Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society*, 273.

¹⁹⁰ Susan Youngs, "Medium and Motif: Polychrome Enamelling and Early Manuscript Decoration in Insular Art," in *From the Isles of the North. Early Medieval Art in Ireland and Britain: Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Insular Art Held in the Ulster Museum, Belfast, 7-11 April, 1994* (Belfast: HMSO, 1995), 37-47; depictions and imitations of works of art in manuscript are more common in Ottonian manuscripts see Wagner, "Silken Parchments"; Bücheler, "Veil and Shroud," 269-97; Jennifer Kingsley, "Picturing the Treasury: The Power of Objects and the Art of Memory in the Bernward Gospels," *Gesta* 50/1 (2011): 19-39; Joshua O'Driscoll, "Visual Vortex: An Epigraphic Image from an Ottonian Gospel Book," *Word & Image* 27/3 (2011): 309-21.

separation, previous scholars have interpreted the ornament as a piece of textile that enriches the meaning of the following text, or they have focused on fictive glass and metal, bringing up questions about pictorial style and geographical origin.¹⁹¹

The carpet pages, however, combine textiles and other materials and organize them within the same frame. The frame seems to create one pictorial surface on which both the interlace and the glasslike inlays should lie. As is evident in the Mark carpet page (fig. 7), the fictive materials blur the positive and negative space and point to an uncertainty of layers in which textiles can appear as the background for the inlays but also the reverse by which the interlace is brought back to the foreground. While the construction of the carpet pages has been described in this sense by a few scholars such as Jean-Claude Bonne and Robert Stevenson, the role of mimicked materials in creating these visual ambiguities along with their possible exegetical context remain almost completely unexplored.¹⁹² The relationship and tension between these layers are investigated in this chapter, which discusses textile, metal, and glass as components of the same pictorial design to shed light on the visual ambiguities that the ornament exposes.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ *Codex Lindisfarnensis*; Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society*; Richard Gameson, *From Holy Island to Durham*, 43-72.

¹⁹² Jean-Claude Bonne, "Intrications: À Propos d'une Composition d'Entrelacs dans un Évangile Celto-Saxon du VII^e Siècle," in *Histoires d'Ornement: Actes du Colloque de l'Académie de France à Rome, Villa Médicis, 27-28 Juin 1996*, ed. Patrice Ceccarini (Rome: Académie de France à Rome, 2000), 75-108; Robert B. K. Stevenson, "Aspects of Ambiguity in Crosses and Interlace," *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 44-45 (1982): 11-17.

¹⁹³ On the status of the ornament as existing in tension between representation and abstraction see Bonne, "De l'Ornemental," 207-40; idem, "Les Ornements de l'Histoire (à Propos de l'Ivoire Carolingien de Saint Remi)," *Annales* 51 (1996), 37-70; on the meaning of sewing textiles in manuscripts as metaphors for the revelation and concealment of words and images, see Christine Sciacca, "Raising the Curtain on the Use of Textiles," in *Weaving, Veiling and Dressing. Textiles and Their Metaphors in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Kathryn M. Rudy and Barbara Baert (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 161-90.

The Layout of the Carpet Pages

Brown has noted how the general design of the carpet pages is reminiscent of Hiberno-Saxon metalwork with gold filigree and enameled ornament.¹⁹⁴ Upon close inspection the ornament creates several layers and it is subject to a continuous visual metamorphosis. We have seen in the Mark carpet page that the beholder perceives material transformations through which the layers make the crosses and inlays both emerge in the foreground and disappear in the background (fig. 7). This effect of ambiguous layering results from constructing a layout that comprises two main elements: the interlace of the ground intermingled with the emerging geometric shapes. The ornament unifies the interweaving lines with the geometry to create positive and negative spaces. This complex visual arrangement gives some clues for interpreting the miniatures not much as a whole composition as a collection of different pictorial elements held in place by a rigid geometry.

The relationship between the layers has been overlooked by most scholars.¹⁹⁵ In general, they have compared the ornament with objects produced in the Mediterranean and have addressed questions about how the painters from the Isles could have found these works of art and used them to paint the Insular carpet pages. A telling example is the way Carl Nordenfalk and Meyer Schapiro set the Insular carpet pages in parallel with a later cross-carpet page in the sixteenth-century Persian manuscript containing Tatian's *Diatessaron* (Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, ms. Or. 81, fol. 127r, fig. 54), and made a hypothetical antique common model the subject of debate.¹⁹⁶ It is my goal to address the research not so much outside the manuscript,

¹⁹⁴ *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society*, 310.

¹⁹⁵ John Onians, "Abstraction and Imagination in Late Antiquity," *Art History* III/1 (1980): 1-24; Robert B. K. Stevenson, "Aspects of Ambiguity," 11-17; Pirotte, "Ornament and Script," 277-88; idem, "Hidden Order," 203-07; Jean-Claude Bonne, "De l'Ornemental," 207-40.

¹⁹⁶ Carl Nordenfalk, "An Illustrated Diatessaron," *Art Bulletin* 50/2 (1968): 119-40; Meyer Schapiro, "The Miniatures of the Florence *Diatessaron* (Laurentian ms. Or.81): Their Place in Late Medieval Art

but rather within it, looking at how the ornament shares visual elements with the other folios. This approach is suggested by the book itself, in which letters, ornament, and figures display similar pictorial features. Mimicked materials, interlace, and geometries also occur in the portraits and the display script of the Lindisfarne Gospels. Additionally, certain means of constructing the ornament in the likeness of the material objects that take the shape of pure geometric designs reappear in the Evangelist portraits as well. In a similar fashion, patterns and interlace of the carpet pages can also be discerned in the letters of the display script.

The visual analogies discernible throughout the illuminations, therefore, reinterpret the value and features of each of the pictorial languages: figurative, ornamental, and script. For instance, the relationship between the geometric decoration and the letters encourages beholders to understand the script as if it were ornament and the ornament as living writing. In turn, by weaving recurring visual elements visible in the manuscript, the ornament reveals its metamorphic and fluid nature, a nature that Bonne has defined as existing in tension between figurative and abstract.¹⁹⁷

The Jerome Carpet Page

The opening ornamental page features an enameled cross over a ground of interlace (fol. 2v, fig. 5 and 55).¹⁹⁸ Because of the clear separation between the

and Supposed Connection with Early Christian and Insular Art," *Art Bulletin* 55/4 (1973): 494-531; Carl Nordenfalk, "The *Diatessaron* Miniatures Once More," *Art Bulletin* 55/4 (1973): 532-46.

¹⁹⁷ Bonne, "De l'Ornemental," 207-40; on the figurative and ornamental image of Christ see Adolf Katzenellenbogen, "The Image of Christ in the Early Middle Ages," in *Life and Thought in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Robert S. Hoyt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1967): 66-84.

¹⁹⁸ On the cross in manuscripts see Bernhard Bischoff, "Kreuz und Buch im Frühmittelalter und in den ersten Jahrhunderten der spanischen Reconquista," in *Bibliotheca Docet. Festgabe für Carl Wehmer* (Amsterdam: Verlag der Erasmus-Buchhandlung, 1963): 19-34; Bonne, "De l'Ornemental," 211-12; idem, "Intrications," 75-108; Michelle Brown, "The Cross and The Book: The Cross-Carpet Pages of The Lindisfarne Gospels as Sacred *Figurae*," in *Cross and Cruciform in the Anglo-Saxon World: Studies to Honor the Memory of Timothy Reuter*, ed. Sarah Larratt Keefer, Karen Louise Jolly and

foreground and the background, the ornament exposes the page's construction—an element that recurs in the following ornamental pages (figs. 6–9).¹⁹⁹ The following carpet pages present compositions made of interlace along with vitreous geometric crosses and geometric shapes, but they are organized in more complex layouts in which the beholder clearly notices visual ambiguities between the layers.

The Jerome carpet page evokes the material presence of a jeweled cross at its center (fig. 55).²⁰⁰ The precious materials transform the sign of Christ's death into an emblem of victory, alluding to the “sign of the Son of Man” that will herald the Second Coming (Mt 24:30).²⁰¹ The cross imitates the polished surfaces of glass and gems and evokes in its material qualities the gemmed cross of Early Christian tradition.²⁰² Since the early Middle Ages, manufactured crosses referred back to the prototype, the True Cross on Golgotha, while indicating their distance from the True Cross made of wood by means of elaborated shape with stepped and curving terminals, and colored green, red, gold or blue.²⁰³ Following Constantine's decision to

Catherine E. Karkov (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2010), 17-52; Beatrice Kitzinger, “Cross and Book: Late-Carolingian Breton Gospel Illumination and the Instrumental Cross” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2012): I would like to thank the author who kindly let me read the manuscript before publication.

¹⁹⁹ On the geometrical composition of this page, see Walter Horn “On the Selective Use of Sacred Numbers and the Creation in Carolingian Architecture of a New Aesthetic Based on Modular Concepts,” *Viator* 6 (1975): 351-90; Jacques Guilmain, “The Composition of the First Cross Page of the Lindisfarne Gospels: ‘Square Schematism’ and the Hiberno-Saxon Aesthetic,” *Art Bulletin* 67 (1985): 535-547.

²⁰⁰ On the gemmed crosses, see Theo Jüdlich, “Gemmenkreuze. Die Farbigkeit ihres Edelsteinbesatzes bis zum 12. Jahrhundert,” *Aachener Kunstblätter* 54/55 (1986/87): 99-258; Kühnel, *From the Earthly to the Heavenly Jerusalem*, 66-90; Hilary Richardson, “The Jewelled Cross and Its Canopy,” in *From the Isles of the North*, 177-86; Kessler, *Seeing Medieval Art*, 67-69; Andrea Marensi, “L’Iconografia della Croce Gemmata. Una Rassegna di Esempi Tardoantichi ed Altomedievali,” in *Gemma della Corte Imperiale alla Corte Celeste*, ed. Gemma Sena Chiesa et al. (Milan: Hoepli, 2002), 99-110; Kitzinger, “Cross and Book”; on the theology of the cross, see Celia Chazelle, *The Crucified God in the Carolingian Era. Theology and Art of Christ's Passion* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

²⁰¹ The gemmed cross is interpreted in reference to this vision and Rev 21:11, which describes the heavenly Jerusalem in terms of gemstones. See Jüdlich, “Gemmenkreuze,” 120.

²⁰² Dominic Janes, *God and Gold in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 52-56; Kühnel, *Earthly to Heavenly Jerusalem*, 68-90.

²⁰³ On the manufactured cross as salvific sign, see Erich Dinkler, *Signum Crucis: Aufsätze zum Neuen Testament und zur christliche Archäologie* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1967); Kitzinger, “Cross and Book”; on the distinction of the cross as a *res sacrata* in the *Liber Caroli*, Opus Caroli regis II.28, in

create a golden banner as a way of recalling the luminous cross that had appeared to him in a dream just before his victorious entry into Rome, the cross embellished with gems was interpreted as the Christian vexillum.²⁰⁴ The tradition was appropriated in the Isles, where the association between the cross and battle standard was maintained for Augustine of Canterbury's entrance into pagan England bearing a cross in 597.²⁰⁵ As Bede explained, Augustine and his preachers came to Britain "bearing as their standard a silver cross and the image of our Lord and Saviour painted on a panel."²⁰⁶ Works of Insular art embellished the metal cross with gems of the heavenly Jerusalem interpreting the cross as Christ's weapon of conquest over death and the symbol of his mortal suffering that brought salvation. The *crux gemmata* remained a sign of Christian triumph and was assimilated to traditions of metalwork. The Anglo-Saxon cross associated with St. Rupert (Salzburg, Cathedral Museum, fig. 56), for instance, applies to the cross the enlivening interlace, knot-work, and stylized vine scrolls of the Insular pictorial language.²⁰⁷

Simultaneously a physical work and an abstract sign, the cross of the Jerome frontispiece emphasizes its material presence by providing visual parallels with still preserved works of art.²⁰⁸ The cross shape with squared terminations recalls such

which the sign of the cross is distinguished from the man-made crosses, see Chazelle, *The Crucified God*, 50-52; Thomas Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2001), 189-193.

²⁰⁴ Janes, *God and Gold*, 52-56; Kühnel, *Earthly to Heavenly Jerusalem*, 68-90.

²⁰⁵ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, bk. 1, ch. 25, trans. Bertram Colgrave, p. 75.

²⁰⁶ "Veniebant, crucem pro vexillo / ferentes argeneteam, et imaginem Domini Salvatoris in tabula depictam": Ibid., bk. 1, 25:46, p. 74.

²⁰⁷ Kessler, *Seeing Medieval Art*, 67-69.

²⁰⁸ The medieval artwork as sign has been topic of wide discussion in the ways hand made objects transcend the visible in favor of the invisible and divine. Kessler, *Seeing Medieval Art*; Ganz and Lentz, *Ästhetik des Unsichtbaren*; Giselle de Nie, Karl F. Morrison and Marco Mostert eds., *Seeing the Invisible in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Papers from "Verbal and Pictorial Imaging, Representing and Accessing Experience of the Invisible, 400-1000"* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005); Jeffrey Hamburger, "The Medieval Work of Art: Wherein the 'Work'? Wherein the 'Art'?", in *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey Hamburger and Anne-Marie Bouché (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006): 374-412; Herbert L. Kessler, *Neither God nor Man. Words, Images and the Medieval Anxiety about Art* (Freiburg i.B.: Rombach, 2007); idem, "Image and Object," 290-319; Beatrice Kitzinger, "The Instrumental Cross and the Use of the Gospel

contemporary high stone sculpture as the Ruthwell cross (fig. 57), while the colors and the construction bring to mind contemporary metalwork embellished with precious stones inserted in small quadrangular metal cells. The painted cross evokes the contemporary pectoral cross associated with St. Cuthbert decorated with garnets and red glass enclosed in gold cells (Durham Cathedral, fig. 58).²⁰⁹ The visual relationship between the Jerome carpet page and Cuthbert's relics is also underlined in the four inlays that surround the central cross. Their stepped patterns are visible in the so-called St. Cuthbert Gospels (London, British Library, Ms. Add. 89000, fig. 59). The small Gospel book has an original red leather binding datable to the seventh century that displays on its back a stepped quadrangular motif very close to the one that decorates the four inlays in the carpet page.

The fact that the Jerome carpet page shares stepped patterns with objects linked to St. Cuthbert might have been intended not only as a reference to the sacrality of the objects evoked, but also as a celebration of pictorial arts, their making and circulation. The fictive enameled cross visible in the Jerome page would have reminded the monks of the community's artistic production of metalwork and other works of art.²¹⁰ Recognizing this phenomenon, in which the painted ornament mimics other media, Brown demonstrated that whereas there is evidence that some patterns of

Book Troyes, Bibliothèque Municipale MS 960," *Different Visions. A Journal of New Perspectives on Medieval Art* 4 (January 2014).

²⁰⁹ On the Ruthwell cross, see Brendan Cassidy ed., *The Ruthwell Cross. Papers from the Colloquium Sponsored by the Index of Christian Art. Princeton University, 8 December 1989* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Fred Orton, "Northumbrian Identity in the Eighth Century: The Ruthwell and Bewcastle Monuments; Style, Classification, Class, and the Form of Ideology," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34 (2004): 95-145; Éamonn Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood: Liturgical Images and the Old English Poems of the Dream of the Rood Tradition* (London: British Library, 2005); on the st. Cuthbert cross, see Rupert L. S. Bruce-Mitford, "The Pectoral Cross," in *The Relics of St. Cuthbert*, ed. Christopher F. Battiscombe (Oxford: University Press, 1956), 308-25; Elizabeth Coatsworth, "The Portable Cross and Portable Altar from the Tomb of St Cuthbert," in *St. Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community to AD 1200*, ed. Gerald Bonner, David W. Rollason and Clare Stancliffe (Woodbridge: Boydell Press; Wolfeboro: Boydell & Brewer, 1989), 287-301.

²¹⁰ Youngs, "Medium and Motif," 37-47.

the ornament were used in pictorial arts probably known at Lindisfarne, these patterns also appear in works of art found at some distance from the Holy Isle.²¹¹ The stepped quadrangular motifs of the inlays, for example, can be discerned in other works of art, such as the eighth-century Irish mould and glass stud from Lagore Crannog (Dublin, National Museum of Ireland, E.14:1572 a, fig. 60).²¹² Irish works of art also display features comparable to the decorative motifs used for the Jerome carpet page. In a similar fashion, other carpet pages share ornamental patterns with objects found outside Northumbria. Nordenfalk, Brown, and Henderson among other scholars have demonstrated that the inlays share decorative motifs with a variety of media from diverse geographical areas, providing a synthetic language that could unify in painting the community of the Church.²¹³ From the fourth-century Frampton Villa mosaic (fig. 61) to the Insular high crosses (fig. 57), from the clasps of the Sutton Hoo treasures (fig. 53) to the interlace on Coptic bindings noticed by Nordenfalk (fig. 62), to give just a few examples, such diverse pieces of pictorial arts all seemed to work as convincing visual comparisons for the carpet pages.²¹⁴ This is because the ornament evokes materials and decorative motifs found in metalwork, enamels, and other objects and unifies them in an original composition.

What material objects were available to the illuminator remains a matter of speculation, but there are reasons to believe that the visual reference to various

²¹¹ Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society*, 370; works of art as physical manifestation and generator of social contacts see Latour, "The Berlin Key," 10-21; Alina Payne, *Dalmatia and the Mediterranean: Portable Archaeology and the Poetics of Influence* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

²¹² Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society*, 370.

²¹³ Carl Nordenfalk, "Corbie and Cassiodorus. A Pattern Page Bearing on the Early History of Bookbinding," *Pantheon* 32 (1974): 225-31; Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, 31; Martin Werner, "The Cross-Carpet Page in the Book of Durrow: The Cult of the True Cross, Adomnán, and Iona," *Art Bulletin* 72 (1990): 174-223; George Henderson, *Early Medieval* (Toronto; Buffalo; London: Toronto University Press, 1993), 98-100; Martin Werner, "The Book of Durrow and the Question of Programme," *Anglo-Saxon England* 26 (1997): 23-39; Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society*, 312.

²¹⁴ Theodore C. Petersen, "Early Islamic Bookbinding and Their Coptic Relations," *Ars Orientalis* 1 (1954), 49; Nordenfalk, "Corbie and Cassiodorus," 225-31; Henderson, *Early Medieval*, 98-100; Backhouse, *The Lindisfarne Gospels*, 71; Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society*, 273.

pictorial traditions would have evoked the idea of the unity of the Church. It is possible to consider the phenomenon of synthesis of forms in light of similar features that appear in the rest of the manuscript. A process of synthesis of foreign languages also shapes the writing and the liturgical feasts included in the Lindisfarne Gospels. Tilghman has demonstrated that the mixed use of Latin, Greek and Runic letters in the Lindisfarne display script, as in such other manuscripts as the Macregol Gospels, conveyed a written language that was the result of the best script available in other traditions.²¹⁵ This practice of appropriation is common in Insular calligraphy, and in a similar fashion, the liturgical feasts listed in the Lindisfarne Gospels seem to borrow from foreign devotional habits. Germain Morin noticed the inclusion of two feasts in honor of the patron of Naples, St. Januarius, and the dedication of the Basilica of St. Stephen—both taken from the Neapolitan calendar.²¹⁶ According to Bede, the Neapolitan liturgy was accessible to and highly respected by the Northumbrian community; in his *Ecclesiastical History*, Bede wrote that Pope Gregory selected the Abbot Hadrian, a man of refined scriptural expertise who came from a monastery near Naples to succeed Deusdedit at the archbishopric of Canterbury in 664.²¹⁷ Employing this process of selection of scriptural and liturgical knowledge available in other lands, other manuscripts produced in the Isles such as the seventh-century manuscript Royal. I B.VII in the British Library and the Codex Amiatinus, mark the Neapolitan feasts in their calendars.²¹⁸

Contemporary texts suggest possible reasons for mixing foreign scripts and

²¹⁵ Tilghman, “Writings in Tongues,” 107-8; Carol Farr, “The Incipit Pages of the Macregol Gospels,” in *Making and Meaning*, 275-87.

²¹⁶ Germain Morin “La Liturgie de Naples au Temps de Saint Gregoire,” *Revue Bénédictine* 8 (1891): 481-93; 529-37, at p. 482; a list of the liturgical readings in *Codex Lindisfarnensis*, 36; Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society*, 183.

²¹⁷ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, bk. 1, ch. 1; Morin, “La Liturgie,” 482-83.

²¹⁸ John Chapman, *Notes on the Early History of the Vulgate Gospels* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), 52-63; Morin “La Liturgie,” 481-93; 529-37; Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society*, 183.

arts in the Lindisfarne ornament. In the Isles, the question of the selection of devotional practices and objects was relevant from the time of the mission of Augustine of Canterbury. Bede provides a detailed account of the epistolary exchanges between Pope Gregory and Augustine, whom the pope had sent to convert the English people in 597.²¹⁹ The communication between Gregory and Augustine was rich in reflections on the scriptural and liturgical texts that the English people had to learn. In one of these letters, Augustine observed the use of the Gallican rite at Canterbury and asked Pope Gregory the reason why one custom of masses was used in the Roman church and another in the Gallican church. Gregory answered the question with these words:

It is my wish that if you have found any customs in the Roman or the Gaulish church or any other Church which may be more pleasing to Almighty God, you should make a careful selection of them and sedulously teach the Church of the English, which is still new in the faith, what you have been able to gather from other churches. For things are not to be loved for the sake of place, but places are to be loved for the sake of their good things. Therefore choose from every individual Church whatever things are devout, religious, and right. And when you have collected these as it were into one bundle, see that the minds of the English grow accustomed to it.²²⁰

The carpet pages show Latin, Greek, and Coptic crosses throughout the manuscript (figs. 5–9), providing the idea of unity of the Church by means of the visual languages that construct it.²²¹ The ornament presents elements of Coptic manuscripts, Pictish stone carvings, and Irish metalwork, exposing a pictorial language that is the sum of the arts of diverse parts of the known world. The wide range of works of art

²¹⁹ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, bk 1, ch. 25.

²²⁰ “Respondit Gregorius papa: Novit fraternitas tua Romanae ecclesiae consuetudinem, in qua se meminit nutritam. Sed mihi placet ut, sive in Romana sive in Galliarum seu in qualibet ecclesia aliquid invenisti, quod plus omnipotenti Deo possit placere, sollicito eligas, et in Anglorum ecclesia, quae adhuc ad fidem nova est, institutione praecipua, quae de multis ecclesiis colligere potuisti, infundas. Non enim pro locis res, sed pro bonis rebus loca amanda sunt. Ex singulis ergo quibusque ecclesiis quae pia, quae religiosa, quae recta sunt elige, et haec quasi in fasciculum collecta apud Anglorum mentes in consuetudinem deponere”: Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, bk. 1, ch. 27:2, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave and Roger A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 81–82.

²²¹ Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society*, 272.

appropriated in the carpet pages needs to be considered within the context of circulation of materials described by Bede. In turn, it seems possible to interpret this unity of varied elements in line with Bede's historical accounts. Bede explained that the attempt to spread the word of the Gospels had to be universal to ensure that the salvation promised by Christ was for everyone.²²² The mixed types of crosses and styles could be used as evidence that the message of the Gospels had reached the farthest land of the world, and therefore, that their content was true and authentic.

The gemmed cross in the Jerome carpet page unifies diverse pictorial languages and provides an image of the cross that belongs to the heavenly realm more than to the present, tangible Church (fig. 55).²²³ The ways in which the Jerome carpet page evokes gems and metals can be interpreted in light of the heavenly Jerusalem as the Evangelist John envisioned it in the Book of Revelation (Rev 21:19–21); the perfection of the celestial church was reflected in the quality of the gold and gems that adorned it.²²⁴ In his exegesis, Bede used glass and metal as means of comparison for virtuous souls. For instance, in parallel to the sea of glass described in the Book of Revelation (Rev 15:2), Bede compared the state of grace received through baptism to frozen water turned into precious glass.²²⁵ Metals and glass have the properties of

²²² For example Pope Boniface sends the pall and an epistle to Justus, successor to Mellitus (AD 624) in the archbishopric of Rochester, see Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, bk. 2, ch. 8, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, 159–61: “Almighty God has not failed either to uphold the honor of his name or to grant fruit to your labors, in accordance with his faithful promise to those who preach the Gospel, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” [...] We are certain that the result of your ministry will be the complete conversion [...] In this way, as it is written, you will receive the reward of a finished task from the Lord and Giver of all good things: and indeed all nations will confess having received the mystery of the Christian faith and will declare in truth that “their sound is gone out into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world.”

²²³ Jennifer O'Reilly, “Early Medieval Text and Image: The Wounded and Exalted Christ,” *Peritia* 6–7 (1987–88): 85–100; Bianca Kühnel, *The End of Time in the Order of Things: Science and Eschatology in Early Medieval Art* (Regensburg: Schnell + Steiner, 2003); Friedrich Ohly, “On the Spiritual Sense of Words in the Middle Ages,” in *Sensus Spiritualis. Studies in Medieval Significance and the Philology of Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 1–30; Kumler and Lakey, “*Res et Significatio*,” 1–17.

²²⁴ Kühnel, *From the Earthly to the Heavenly Jerusalem*, 68–90.

²²⁵ Bede, *Explanatio Apocalypsi*, bk. 1, ch. 4, PL 93, col. 143D: “*Et in conspectu sedis, tanquam mare vitreum, simile crystallo.* [...] *Crystallo quoque, quod de aqua in glaciem et lapidem pretiosum*

surpassing the ordinary sensorial effects, making the light shine better or the sounds last longer.²²⁶ They are subject to corruption but they are more durable than any other material.²²⁷ They provide the human experience with a glimpse of the excellence of the heavenly realm, and therefore they better allude to spiritual purity and righteousness.²²⁸ While the patterns of the carpet pages evoke works of art in various media, the ornament shows enamel-like surfaces, disregarding other materials like stone or leather.²²⁹ The colored glass surface delimited by the shiny metal frame evokes the complementary presence of the everlasting metals and colored glass, the materials that the New Testament selected for the Heavenly Jerusalem.

The process of synthesis and refinement of materials appears along with the display of a cross featuring geometrical shapes. While the patterns and enamel-like surface of the cross on the Jerome page evokes artifacts, the form itself is abstracted into the perfect language of geometrical knowledge.²³⁰ Six squares compose the central cross. The surface inside the cross reiterates the quadrangular shapes, showing a green square at the center of each of the squares of the cross, while lozenge-shaped

efficitur, baptismi gratia figuratur"; Thomas Raff, *Die Sprache der Materialien: Anleitung zu einer Ikonologie der Werkstoffe* (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1994), 66.

²²⁶ Metal and glass enhance the sensorial experiences: Bede, *De Tabernaculo*, PL 91, col. 487C: "Aes namque plus aliis metallis sonorum ac diu durabile est; aurum vero quantum sono succumbit, tantum splendore praestat aeramento"; on the relevance of the inherent qualities of materials in works of art see Raff, *Die Sprache*; Jérôme Baschet, "Introduction: L'Image-Objet," in *L'Image. Fonctions et Usages des Images dans l'Occident Médiéval*, ed. Jérôme Baschet and Jean-Claude Schmitt (Paris, Léopard d'Or, 1996), 7-57; Kessler, *Seeing Medieval Art*, 19-42.

²²⁷ Bede, *Sententiae ex Aristotele Collectae*, PL 90, 1:969A: "Aurum est incorruptibile, id est, valde durativum inter omnia alia metalla, quia durat ultra ordinationem humanam."

²²⁸ Bede, *Explanatio Apocalypsis*, bk. 3, ch. 21, PL 93, col. 197B: "Vitrum autem ad fidem veri retulit, quia quod foris videtur, hoc est et intus"; on metals and gems to figure spiritual reward see Ulrich Henze, "Edelsteinallegorese im Lichte mittelalterlicher Bild- und Reliquienverehrung," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 54 (1991): 428-51; Sena Chiesa ed., *Gemme dalla Corte Imperiale*; Kessler, *Seeing Medieval Art*, 20; Malgorzata Krasnodebska-D'Aughton, "A *Gemmarium* for the Recognition of Precious Stones in the Cracow Chapter Library, MS 140: A Study on the Unity of Exegetical Themes," in *Listen, O Isles, Unto Me. Studies in Medieval Word and Image in Honour of Jennifer O'Reilly*, ed. Elizabeth Mullins and Diarmuid Scully (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011): 47-59.

²²⁹ Mimicked enamels also appear in the ornament of other manuscripts. The medallions of the cross-carpet page in the Book of Kells (folio 33r) display a fictive metal cross filled with the colors yellow and green.

²³⁰ Guilmain, "Composition of the First Cross Page," 535-54.

quadrangles fill the rest of the space. The four inlays that surround the cross similarly show geometric patterns made of concentric quadrangles. This mathematical construction of the ornament recalls the pictorial rendering of certain objects in the Evangelist portraits that simultaneously show a real object and a geometric sign.²³¹

The relationship between the material things and the signs, however, is further complicated in the carpet page by the creating of crosses in the negative spaces.²³² The intricacy of the ornament hides several shapes that the beholder can see after careful examination. The squares that compose the central gemmed cross have an interspace between them; in that interspace, the beholder can find several crosses drawn in the negative. Surrounding the central square of the cross, for instance, at least four negative crosses created within the interlace on the background are visible. The illuminator stressed the effect of the repetition of cruciform shapes by painting the interlace as consecutive yellow and red squares. In the sequence of yellow, red, and yellow again, the beholder can find a considerable number of crosses interwoven between the background and the enameled cross in the foreground.

The ornament reworks the arguments exposed in the Evangelist portraits, in which the material objects appear as tangible means of perfect and abstract forms. The Jerome carpet page similarly addresses the argument of the Christian sign of the cross, which exists in its material quality while also abstracted in a geometric language. However, the carpet page also requires and stimulates the beholder's close attention for seeing the crosses concealed in the painting. The opening carpet exposes hidden shapes and mimicked materials. In this way the ornament questions whether

²³¹ Chapter 2 in this dissertation; on the relationship between material and sign in images of the cross, see Kitzinger, "Cross and Book."

²³² Stevenson, "Aspects of Ambiguity," 11-17; also works of Insular art other than manuscripts feature ambiguities of perception. See Jenifer Ní Ghrádaigh, "Otherworldly Gesturing? Understanding Linear Complexity in Medieval Insular Art," in *Linea II. Giochi, Metamorfosi, Seduzioni della Linea*, ed. Marzia Faietti and Gerhard Wolf (Florence: Giunti, 2012): 77-97, at 79-84.

pictorial arts are able to directly link the earthly precious material to the perfect forms. Rather, it suggests how painting can be obscure and fictitious, depending on the beholder's understanding of it. This is the critical problem that the following ornamental pages will further explore.

The Matthew Carpet Page

The Matthew carpet page displays, at the center, a Latin cross constructed of five chalice-shaped arms organized around a circle (fol. 26v, fig. 63). These features connect the cross to the memorial slabs typical of Northumbria (fig. 64);²³³ a certain number of the so-called name-slabs are still preserved nearby Lindisfarne and Durham. They are engraved with a cross with chalice-shaped arms extended up to the frame that recalls the shape of the cross in the Lindisfarne Gospels. Works available in the eighth-century Northumbria represent the cross with chalice terminations that, as Catherine Karkov has demonstrated, appears especially in Insular environment and refers to the Eucharistic sacrament.²³⁴ Insular works of art, for instance, display the Eucharistic chalice in scenes of the crucifixion. Muirdach's high cross at Monasterboice (fig. 65), along with the seventh-century Durham Gospels (Durham, Cathedral Library, MS A.ii.17, fol. 38³b, figs. 66-67), substitute a cup or a chalice for the sponge filled with sour wine and held up to Christ's mouth (Mt 27:48, Mk 15:36, Jn 19:29).²³⁵

²³³ Christine Maddern, *Raising the Dead: Early Medieval Name Stones in Northumbria* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).

²³⁴ Catherine Karkov, "The Chalice Cross in Insular Art," in *The Age of Migrating Ideas*, 237-44; Éamonn Ó Carragáin, "The Cross and the Eucharist on the High Crosses at Ruthwell (in Northumbria) and at Kells (in Ireland)," in *La Croce: Iconografia e Interpretazione (secoli I- inizio XVI): Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi, (Napoli, 6-11 dicembre 1999)*, ed. Boris Ulianich (Naples: De Rosa, 2007), vol. 3, 127-141.

²³⁵ On the Durham Gospels and its connection with the script in the Lindisfarne Gospels, see Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society*, 252-53; Jennifer O'Reilly, "Know Who and What He Is": The Context and Inscriptions of the Durham Gospels Crucifixion Image," in *Making and Meaning in Insular Art. Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference in Insular Art* (Dublin: Four Courts

The reference to the Eucharist, stressed in the chalice-shaped cross of the Matthew carpet page is further enriched by ornament that evokes the mystery of Christ's incarnation at several levels.²³⁶ The Matthew carpet page is the one that most clearly reveals the fleshy nature of the cross because of the animals that fill its body.²³⁷ Formed of writhing green and orange quadrupeds, the arms of the cross show terrestrial animals; while the ground is filled with S-shaped loops of entwined birds and peacocks colored predominantly in pink and blue, with green, orange, and yellow details (fig. 68). The iconography links the cross to the earthly world representing the animals that live in it, and defines the cross as a living wood. The dominant green color of the interlaced animals is visible in the Matthew cross especially, and recalls the Tree of Life, a theme that was visually interpreted with branches and leaves intertwining in repetitive curvilinear forms.²³⁸ Such stone sculptures as the Ruthwell and the Bewcastle high crosses both show on the sides of their vertical arms similar vegetal interlace inhabited by birds and beasts (fig. 69). The Ruthwell cross celebrates the living sign of the cross by inscribing Runic verses excerpted from the poem the *Dream of the Rood*, and reinforces the connection between the living cross and the victorious Christ. The tituli that run around the branches tell of the paradox that the

Press, 2007), 301-16; Thomas J. Brown, Elizabeth Coatsworth and Christopher D. Verey eds., *The Durham Gospels: Together with Fragments of a Gospel Book in Uncial, Durham, Cathedral Library, MS A. II.17* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1980).

²³⁶ On the ornament and incarnation see Tilghman, "Symbolic Use," 71-123.

²³⁷ Bruce-Mitford, *Codex Lindisfarnensis*, 199-201.

²³⁸ On the connection between the cross and the Tree of Life see Romauld Bauerreiss, *Arbor Vitae: der "Lebensbaum" und seine Verwendung in Liturgie, Kunst und Brachtum des Abenlandes* (Munich: Neuer Filser-Verlag, 1938); Victor Elbern, "Omnis Mundi Creatura. Das Kreuz und die Repräsentanten der belebten Schöpfung," in *Iconographica: Mélanges Offerts à Piotr Skubiszewski par ses Amis, ses Collègues, ses Élèves*, ed. Robert Favreau and Marie-Hélène Debièsx (Poitiers: Université de Poitiers, Centre d'Études Supérieures de Civilisation Médiévale, 1999), 81-90; Erik Thunø, *Image and Relic: Mediating the Sacred in Early Medieval Rome* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2002), 59-60; on the Tree of Life in the Ruthwell cross see Ó Carragáin, "Arbor Vitae: The Function of the Ruthwell Vine-Scrolls and Their Runic Tituli," in *Ritual and the Rood*, 280-298; Barbara C. Raw, "The Dream of the Rood and Its Connections with Early Christian Art," *Medium Aevum* 39 (1970), 239-56.

cross itself had to accept by lifting up the dying body of Christ, covered with blood, but powerful as a king.²³⁹

Relying on an Early Christian tradition, Bede interpreted the *lignum vitae* as a typology for Christ; like Christ, the tree provided the fruits of eternal life:

Moses testifies that like the tree of life placed in the middle of Paradise, so the divine knowledge, that is Christ, brings life to the Church by means of the sacrament of Christ's blood and flesh.²⁴⁰

Bede also interpreted the Eucharistic sacrament and the living wood in the wider context that covered the history of humanity from creation and interpreted the cross as the human attempt to approach the divine *Logos*.²⁴¹ The stone crosses and the Matthew carpet page merge the images of the tree of knowledge and the wood of the cross. Relying on Genesis (Gn 2:9) and Revelation (Rev 2:7; 22:2,14), Bede maintained that the visual connection between the cross and the tree found explanation in the belief that the living tree was an allegory of Christ or the divine wisdom that Christians would have to approach in order to gain eternal life.²⁴²

The Matthew carpet page highlights the material qualities of the cross. The red contour of the central cross, along with its orange, green, and yellow colors and its circular bosses with quadrangular terminations, is outlined in blank parchment to distinguish the cross from its background. The effect is striking, since the beholder

²³⁹ The side of the cross now facing east writes: "Almighty God stripped himself. When he / willed to mount the gallows, / courageous before all men, / [I dared not] bow ..."; "I [lifted up] a powerful king. / The lord of heaven I dared not tilt / men insulted the pair of us together; I / was drenched with blood / poured from the man's side"; the side now facing west writes: "Christ was on the cross / but eager ones came thither from afar / noble ones came together: I beheld all that: / I was terribly afflicted with sorrows: I bowed [to the hands of men]"; "Wounded with arrows, / they laid him down, limb-spent; they took / their stand at the head and feet of his corpse / there they looked upon the lord of heaven." Tituli in Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, xxii-xxiii and xxvi-xxvii; Margaret Jennings, "Rood and Ruthwell: The Power of Paradox," *English Language Notes* 31/3 (1994): 6-12.

²⁴⁰ "Sicut in medio paradisi lignum vitae positum Moyses testatur, ita per sapientiam Dei, videlicet Christum, vivificatur Ecclesia, cuius et nunc sacramentis carnis et sanguinis pignus vitae accipit": Bede, *Super Parabolas Salomonis Allegorica Expositio*, bk. 1, ch. 3, PL 91, col. 952C.

²⁴¹ Bede, *Explanatio Apocalypsis*, bk. 1, ch. 2, PL 93, col. 137D; bk. 3, ch. 22, PL 93, col. 204B; Pseudo-Bede, *In Pentateuchum*, bk. 1, ch. 2, PL 91, cols. 205B-208C; Pseudo-Bede, *Quaestionum Super Genesim*, PL 93, cols. 268B-D.

²⁴² Bede, *Explanatio Apocalypsis*, bk. 1, ch. 2, PL 93, col. 137D; bk. 3, ch. 22, PL 93, col. 204B.

discovers that both the cross and the background are composed of interlaced patterns of birds and beasts. Made of similar interlace, the cross is differentiated from the ground because it is rendered in a polished, glass-like or metal-like surface. The illuminator turned the organic bodies of animals into the enduring material of metals. As it was understood by the Northumbrian community, and expressed by Bede, the transformation of animals into metals could point to the eternal nature of the divine. Moses offered the scriptural inspiration for this idea. The Evangelist John commented on the brazen serpent, explaining that the Lord asked Moses to set it on a pole to cure the people of Israel bitten by poisonous snakes (Nm 21:89), and allegorically understood the event as a prefiguration of Christ's triumph over death (Jn 3:1–4).²⁴³ Following Scripture, Bede maintained that, because the serpent elevated by Moses was made of bronze, it was an image of the victorious Christ. The main reason behind the allegory was the fact that although Christ died in his body, he never died in his immutable and eternal nature, evoked by the durability of bronze.²⁴⁴ The Lindisfarne Gospels does not explicitly represent the brazen serpent, but the ornament visually renders the process of transformation of the serpent-like interlace into the shiny surface of durable metalwork.

The Matthew page does not make clear whether the material it shows is gold, bronze, silver, or any other recognizable metal (fig. 63). If we compare the Matthew cross-carpet page with other representations of the gemmed cross—for example, the gold cross with gems that appears in the apse mosaic in Sant'Apollinare in Classe in

²⁴³ “Sicut exaltavit Moyses serpentem. Quod autem aeneus est, significat quod ille secundum carnem mortuus fuerit, sed divinitate aeternus sit. Aes quippe durabilis caeteris esse metallis solet. Quod autem Moyses istum serpentem posuit, non incongrue ostendit quod lex Christum prophetavit”: Pseudo-Bede, *In Pentateuchum*, PL 91, col. 369C.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.; Raff, *Die Sprache*, 33-36.

Ravenna (fig. 70)—the differences between the two crosses stand out.²⁴⁵ In Ravenna, the cross shows a gold structure embellished with green and blue gems, the colors of emeralds and sapphires, which recall the gems of the heavenly Jerusalem as described in the Book of Revelation (21:19). White pearls surround the precious stones in accordance with the twelve gates of the Holy City, which the Bible explains were twelve pearls (Rev 21:21). The illuminator of the Gospels used a technique that emphasizes the physical characteristics of precious materials. He shaded the colors within the cross so as to imitate visually the polished surface of metals and gems. Light brown lines delimit small cells filled with color and separated from the other cells by an interspace of parchment. Recreating the general effect of enamels, the cross emphasizes the translucent presence of colored glass. The cross reveals a visual association with metalwork in its general structure, stressed by the animal ornament that it shares with fine metalwork like the Tara brooch (Dublin, National Museum of Ireland, R4015, fig. 71).²⁴⁶ However, no clear metal is visible in the Matthew page; rather, red and green colors fill the entire fictive cross, which evokes enamels in its external appearance and construction. The cross reminds its viewers of metalwork, but it represents enamels and exalts the copresence of bright metals and transparent glasses.

Glass and metal of the enameled cross spiritually transform the brazen serpent evoked by the interweaving animals. The illuminator might have been aware of the contemporary discussion on material images. Bede used the image of the brazen serpent as Old Testament typology for New Testament subject; in his text on the

²⁴⁵ Josef Engemann, “Auf die Parusie Christi hinweisende Darstellungen in der frühchristlichen Kunst,” *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 19 (1976), 139-56; Herbert L. Kessler, “Bright Gardens of Paradise,” in *Picturing the Bible*, 111-39; Angelika Michael, *Das Apsismosaik von S. Apollinare in Classe: seine Deutung im Kontext der Liturgie* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2005).

²⁴⁶ Niamh Whitfield, “The ‘Tara’ Brooch: An Irish Emblem of Status in Its European Context,” in *From Ireland Coming*, 211-47.

Temple, he described the brazen serpent lifted by Moses in order to provide evidence that it was suitable and meaningful to make pictorial arts for the remembrance of Christ's incarnation.²⁴⁷ The emphasis on displaying glass and metals had a context in the Insular environment. The enameled surface of the fictive cross in the Matthew carpet page recalls the colored glass of the figure of Christ produced in seventh- or eighth-century Wearmouth-Jarrow, which Francesca Dell'Acqua has discussed in light of the contemporary debate on images.²⁴⁸ She argued that the gemlike glass enclosed by metal would have encased the ineffable light in transparent matter. The luminous surface of the fictive cross of the Matthew carpet pages seems to emphasize the brightness of metal and glass also described in such texts as Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies*.²⁴⁹

What was contained in the Old Testament, needed to be brought to life. The living cross of the Matthew carpet page evokes the prophecies hidden in the Old Testament in their process of conversions into the living letters of the New. The serpent-like interlace might appear as the foliate branches of the tree of life, but it also take up the flesh of animals and beasts, which intertwine and bite one another. The cross makes visible the transformation of vegetal motifs into snakes. As the commentaries on the Pentateuch explained, when Moses was before the Pharaoh in

²⁴⁷ Bede, *De Templo* 2, ed. David Hurst, *CCSL* 119a (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969), 212-13, see this dissertation, p. 124; on glass and metal as typology, see Herbert L. Kessler, "They Preach not by Speaking out Loud but by Signifying:" Vitreous Arts as Typology," *Gesta* 51 (2012): 55-70, at 59-60.

²⁴⁸ Francesca Dell'Acqua, "The Christ from San Vincenzo al Volturno (9th c.): Another Instance of 'Christ's Dazzling Face,'" in *The Single Stained-Glass Panel: XXIV. International Colloquium of the Corpus Vitrearum (Zurich, 30th of June–4th of July 2008)*, ed. Valérie Sauterel, and Stefan Trümpler (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), 11-22 and 23-27; eadem, "Il Volto di Cristo e il Dilemma dell'Artista: Un Esempio di IX Secolo," in "*Conosco un Ottimo Storico dell'Arte . . .*": *Per Enrico Castelnuovo Scritti di Allievi e Amici Pisani*, ed. Maria M. Donato, and Massimo Ferretti (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2012), 21-27; eadem, "Il Fuoco, le Vetrare delle Origini e la Mistica Medievale," in *Il Fuoco nell'Alto Medioevo. LX Settimana di Studio (Spoleto, 12–17 April 2012)*, ed. Enrico Menestò (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2013), 557-97.

²⁴⁹ Isidore of Seville, "Stones and Metals," in *Etymologies*, trans. Stephen A. Barney (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), bk. 16, pp. 317-36.

Egypt, his rod was turned into a serpent; the metamorphosis of the rod into the serpent was an image of Christ's death.²⁵⁰ The revelation of the cross is a continuous conversion of meanings that proceeds up to the interpretative process of the beholder, an act described in exegesis as a physical chewing of the content of Scripture.²⁵¹ The ornament features biting animals and recalls the hermeneutical act of ruminating on the Word of the Gospels. In parallel to Christ's human nature, the dead letters written before the incarnation had to undergo a process of enlivenment. The cross of the victorious Christ finds visual expression in the paradoxes of a Word that comes alive in the moment it meets death.

Related in meaning to the Evangelist portrait, the carpet page also weaves a visual relationship with the letters of the following page. At the beginning of the Gospels, the words "*Liber generationis Ihesu Christi filii David filii Abraham*" (Mt 1:1) cover the parchment, enclosed within a frame of about the same size as the ornamental page (fol. 27r, fig. 72). The visual connections between the script page and the ornament also involve the palette, the metalwork patterns that inhabit the letters, and the living interlace that constructs the bodies of the words. The initial letters "*Lib*" expose red and blue interlace transformed into twisting animals, displaying the idea of bringing the word to life (figs. 73 and 74).²⁵² When the

²⁵⁰ "Post haec Moysi postulanti signum dicitur: Projice virgam quam manu gestas, et projecit, et factus est serpens, et fugit pavidus. Et apprehendit caudam, et fuit iterum virga. Serpens autem mortem significat. Per serpentem enim homini mors perlata est. Virga autem Christus est. Virga versa in serpentem, Christus versus in mortem": Pseudo-Bede, *In Pentateuchum*, ch. 4, *PL* 91, cols. 295D-296A.

²⁵¹ Marin, *Parole Mangée*; Rachel Fulton, "'Taste and See that the Lord is Sweet' (Ps. 33:9): The Flavor of God in the Monastic West," *The Journal of Religion* 86/2 (2006): 169-204; Carmela Viricillo Franklin, "Words as Food: Signifying the Bible in the Early Middle Ages," *Settimane di Studio della Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo* 52 (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2005), 2:733-62.

²⁵² On script combined with ornament and figurative representations in Carl Nordenfalk, *Die spätantiken Zierbuchstaben* (Stockholm: Egnellska boktr. distr., 1970); Jonathan Alexander, *The Decorated Letter* (New York: G. Braziller, 1978); Brenk, "Schriftlichkeit und Bildlichkeit," 631-82; Kendrick, *Animating the Letter*; Jeffrey Hamburger, *Script as Image* (Paris; Leuven: Peeters, 2014).

ornament is interpreted in light of the Word made flesh of the facing text opening the Gospels, it reveals the ways pictorial arts engage with the paradoxical nature of the Word. This is especially evident in the ornament of the Evangelist who wrote extensively about Christ's incarnation. The cross is enlivened while frozen in solid glass; it is revealed in its material reality while hidden within the intricacy of the ornament.

The Mark Carpet Page

The enamel quality of the paint that characterizes the cross in the Matthew carpet page reappears in the Mark carpet page (fol. 94v, fig. 75). Four enameled inlays embellished with interweaving animals give form to a square that contains a fifth circular inlay at its center, which itself recalls a cloisonné enamel boss of the kind that decorates such metalwork as the Ardagh chalice (Dublin, National Museum of Ireland, IA:1874.99, fig. 76).²⁵³ The pictorial rendering also evokes enamels: the contours of the crosses at the outer edge of the circle are curved, conveying the plastic effect of a jewel. Enamels and millefiori crosses decorate the narrow rectangular panels at the external sides of the carpet page, while the upper and lower panels consist of paired squares filled with La Tène spiralwork of pelta and trumpet motifs rendered as luminous as glass (fig. 77).²⁵⁴

The Mark carpet page interprets anew the enameled cross exposed in the Matthew carpet page by displaying ambiguities between the pictorial layers. The ornament focuses on an almost equally armed cross that is visible in the negative

²⁵³ The Ardagh chalice is dated between the eighth and the tenth century. The early date is supported by the names of the apostles inscribed below the horizontal band of gold filigree that show a lettering similar to the script of the Lindisfarne Gospels. The uncertainty of the date does not affect the visual comparison suggested in this study. See Michael Ryan, "The Derrynaflan and Other Irish Eucharistic Chalices," in *Ireland and Europe: The Early Church* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984), 135-48.

²⁵⁴ Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society*, 327.

space (fig. 7).²⁵⁵ As Stevenson, Bonne and Pirotte have noted, the number of crosses hidden in the ornament increases when the beholder looks more closely at the design.²⁵⁶ The central inlay is surrounded by yellow, blue, and red interlace that the beholder interprets as a negative space behind the three-dimensional enamel (fig. 75). The central enameled inlay features stepped patterns shaped as red and yellow crosses. Again, the central three-dimensional enamel and the flat interlace patterns that surrounds it describe the shape of a cross of St. Andrew when they are considered together. The process of finding hidden crosses can continue to cover the entire pictorial surface. The central large negative cross extends its four arms from the central glass toward the external margins of the page and terminates in crosslets, thus multiplying the sign of the cross up to the edges of the frame.

Along with the crosses, the design reveals and hides lozenges, circles, and squares; these geometric shapes emerging from the background establish a visual relationship between the ornament and the preceding image of the Evangelist. Circles and squares are dominant in the portrait of Mark: the circle appears in the haloes of both the writer and his symbol, while the desk unusually emphasizes the circular form. The same picture features several quadrangles, visible in the closed and open codices that both Mark and his symbol are holding, along with the geometric constructions of the Evangelist's seat and footstool. Circles and quadrangles are the forms that adorn and give shape to the inlays, and they also appear as yellow and blue patterns visible throughout the interweaving lines. Mark, the Evangelist who declared Christ's divinity in the incipit of his Gospel, is presented through ornament in which the forms tend to be hidden more than revealed. The process of concealment is also

²⁵⁵ The central cross is not perfectly equal. For the geometric construction of this page, see Stevick, *Earliest Irish*, 136-41.

²⁵⁶ Stevenson, "Aspects of Ambiguity," 11-17; Pirotte, "Hidden Order," 203-207; Bonne, "Intrications," 75-108.

stressed in the Evangelist portrait, which, to a greater extent than the others, points to the pure shapes as signs that need to be discovered within the objects.²⁵⁷

The display script on the following folio enriches the meaning of the carpet page. The initial letters “I” and “N” of the beginning of Mark’s Gospel—*Initium evangelii*—merge their bodies into one letter and recall the constructions of the previous carpet page (fol. 95r, fig. 78). Red and blue interlace fills the central part of the letters, making a cross appear at their conjunction. Quadrangular inlays with intertwined zoomorphic bodies decorate the arms of the letters and visually recall the metal-like central square of the carpet page on the verso of the same opening. The ornament fills the words, but the carpet page is also linked to these words in their artistry.²⁵⁸ The decorative elements found in the initials embellish the carpet page, and their facing positions highlight the visual dialogue that the script and the ornament establish with each other. Looking at the ornament in light of the display script and vice versa, the composition exposes how pictorial arts and Scripture have to be unified for the materials to be able to reveal the Word. That revelation, in Mark especially, is exposed in the carpet page by means of a visual tension between the materials and the signs that enhances what is invisible, ineffable, hidden, and need to be sought out in the negative space.

²⁵⁷ Chapter 2 in this dissertation; for the medieval understanding of the relationship between the things and the signs, see Ohly, *Sensus Spiritualis*, 1-30; Kumler and Lakey, “*Res et Significatio*.”

²⁵⁸ Kendrick, *Animating the Letter*; Malgorzata Krasnodebska-D’Aughton, “Decoration of the *In Principio* Initials in Early Insular Manuscripts: Christ as a Visible Image of the Invisible God,” *Word and Image* 18/2 (2002): 105-119; Kessler, “The Word Made Flesh in Early Decorated Bibles,” in *Picturing the Bible*, 141-67; Tilghman, “Symbolic Use.”

The Luke Carpet Page

Like the Mark carpet page, the ornament that opens the Gospel of Luke focuses on a cross with equal arms (fol. 138v, fig. 79).²⁵⁹ The cross' terminals expand into fretwork, and its center shows, like the carpets of Jerome, Matthew, and Mark, an inlay inspired by metalwork. The central square consists of four circles decorated with pelta and trumpet motifs enclosed in circles, while the quadrangular inlays placed above and below the central cross feature interlaced bodies of birds and quadrupeds. All these patterns are common in Insular metalwork, and appear, for example, in the niello and gold decorations of the Tara brooch (figs. 77 and 80).²⁶⁰

The black cross that appears at the center of the inlay, along with the negative fretwork cross that covers almost the entire surface of the page, provides the carpet page with a dominant sense of emptiness (fig. 79). The construction of the page highlights the interplay between the positive and negative spaces, thus evoking the paradox of revealing the invisible. The carpet page exposes a geometric pattern of repeated black ink fretwork covering the pictorial surface within the frame (fig. 81). This carpet of fretwork links the central cross to the pattern around it, not only in its formal aspect but also in its construction, presenting the beholder with processes of emergence from the background visible in the central cross as well. Keywork motifs construct the carpet pages as if they were emerging from the dark red background of the page. The illuminator used lighter ink next to the borders and darker ink toward the center, thereby giving the impression that the keywork patterns gradually appear from the background. The ornament reveals a process of revelation of shapes. Such revelation is accompanied by a mechanism of partial concealment of crosses and

²⁵⁹ For the layout of the page and its geometric ratio, see Robert D. Stevick, "The Design of Folio 138v," 3-12; Jacques Guilmain, "On the Layout and Ornamentation of the Cross-Carpet Page of the Lindisfarne Gospels, Folio 138v," *Gesta* 24 (1985): 13-18.

²⁶⁰ Whitfield, "The 'Tara' Brooch," 211-247.

lozenges within the same ground of fretwork. Throughout the page, the keywork patterns display juxtaposed blue and yellow lozenges in which the beholder can discern several imaginary crosses (fig. 79). To give one example, the yellow lozenges that divide the square at the center of the page from each of the four rectangular inlays appear as if they were the centers of four crosses created in the negative space. In line with this process of appearance and concealment of shapes, the body of the central keywork cross is constructed by interlace that emerge from the background but leave the central cross visible in the negative space. In turn, the emergence of the cross engages with the idea that the Christian sign of the cross is revealed from the background, but it is still obscure and concealed.

The carpet page establishes a visual connection with the preceding portrait of Luke and reinterprets the argument of the impossibility that either bodily or spiritual eyes could see the divinity also exposed in the Evangelist portrait. Lozenges, circles, and squares are the shapes recurrent in both the Evangelist portrait and the carpet page. The image of Luke presents lozenges in both the codex held by his symbol and the letters “O” of the inscription “*O agios Lukas*”. The Evangelist’s halo is drawn as a perfect circle, while his seat is shaped as a square. The central enamel of the carpet page is structured in the same fashion as a square filled with circular ornament, while the surface of the carpet page features numerous lozenges. In analyzing the constructions of the Evangelist portrait, we have seen such material things as the codices or the seat appear at once as objects and geometric signs. Reinterpreting this visual argument, the ornamental page stresses the role of pictorial arts in their function of manifesting the invisible by means of the visible. The carpet page makes the argument more complex by disclosing how the relationship between the materials and the signs is not univocal and easy to access, but rather ambiguous, subject to

interpretations, and ultimately ungraspable. In this line of thought the ornament emphasizes the idea of seeing nothing already exposed in the emptiness of Luke's codex by creating a central cross in the negative space, and featuring a black grounded cross in the central enamel.

The display script reworks the visual paradoxes of the ornament and adds gold leaf to build arguments about the spiritual understanding of the Word. There are repeated patterns in both the ornament and in the words opening the Gospels, similarities which suggest that letters and ornament are to be understood as a whole (fol. 139r, fig. 82).²⁶¹ The initial "Q" of the "*Quoniam quidem*" contains in its loop the circles with trumpets and moon-like shapes that also appear in the central square of the ornamental page (figs. 80 and 83). Red and blue interlace visible in the ornament are repeated in the opening letters of the Gospels (figs. 79 and 83), establishing visual relationships that allow the beholder to interpret the ornament in comparison with the word at the beginning of the Gospel. While the illuminator deployed the same decorative patterns in the ornamental page and in the display script, he added a new element in the opening of the Gospels: a triangle of gold leaf that appears at the conjunction of the volutes that compose the bowl of the letter "Q" (fig. 83).²⁶² This is one of the few instances in the Lindisfarne Gospels in which the illuminator employed real gold. The incipit of Matthew shows applied gold leaf circles as infill to the La Tène spiralwork of the letters "*Lib*" of the word "*Liber*" (fol. 27r, fig. 84). Powered gold appears in the "*Chi rho*" and crosses are featured along with the inscriptions of the Evangelist symbols rendered in chrysography at the top margins of the display script in Matthew ("*Chi rho*" followed by "*Ihs xps matheus*

²⁶¹ Tilghman, "Symbolic Use."

²⁶² For the limited amount of gold in Insular manuscripts, see Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society*, 278-289; on the role of metals in rendering the allegories contained in Scripture: Raff, *Die Sprache*, 59-67.

homo,” fol. 27r, fig. 85), Mark (“*Marcus leo*,” fol. 95r, fig. 86), Luke (“*Chi rho*” and the inscription “*Lucas vitulus*,” fol. 139r, fig. 87), and John (cross and “*Iohannis aquila*,” fol. 211r, fig. 88).²⁶³

The use of gold in the manuscript is limited to letters and *nomina sacra*.²⁶⁴

The presence of real metal in such few instances is meaningful, especially if we consider the fact that the manuscript evokes fictive materials throughout its five carpet pages. The appearance of gold leaf in the incipit of Luke is particularly significant because in exegesis the “*Quoniam quidem*” was a suitable biblical passage for reflecting on the Gospels’ revelation of the tangible nature of the Word of God. Luke explains that the Gospels transmit the *Logos* that was seen from the beginning, and opens his text with these words:

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a narration of the things that have been accomplished among us. According as they have delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word (Lk 1:1–2).²⁶⁵

Ambrose noted that the Evangelist strikingly described the perception of the word by means of the eyes rather than the ears. According to Ambrose, the Evangelist meant that the Gospels revealed the Word of God in its carnal substance, and not just as sound:

In the Gospels it is not a voice that is seen; it is something superior to a voice; it is the Word that is seen. So, John the Evangelist declares: “That which was from the beginning.”²⁶⁶

²⁶³ On chrysography, see Kendrick, *Animating the Letter*, 75–76; Ulrich Ernst, “Leuchtschriften: Vom Himmelsbuch zur Lichtinstallation,” in *Beiträge zu einer Kulturgeschichte des Leuchtended*, ed. Christina Lechtermann and Haiko Wandhogg (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008), 71–89, at 71–79; Ulrich Ernst, *Facetten mittelalterlicher Schriftkultur. Fiktion und Illustration. Wissen und Wahrnehmung* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2008); Thunø, “Looking at Letters,” 33; Hamburger, *Script as Image*.

²⁶⁴ Gold inscriptions as revelation of the divine in Kendrick, *Animating the Letter*; Erik Thunø, “Looking at Letters: ‘Living Writing’ in S. Sabina in Rome,” *Marburger Jahrbuch* 34 (2007), 20–21; 32–25; idem, “Inscription and Divine Presence. Golden Letters in the Early Medieval Apse Mosaic,” *Word and Image* 27/3 (2011): 279–91; Hamburger, *Script as Image*.

²⁶⁵ “Quoniam quidem multi conati sunt ordinare narrationem, quae in nobis completae sunt, rerum: Sicut tradiderunt nobis, qui ab initio ipsi viderunt, et ministri fuerunt sermonis.”

²⁶⁶ “In Evangelio autem non vox, sed illud quod voce praestantius est, Verbum videtur. Unde et Joannes sanctus Evangelista: *Quod erat*, inquit, *ab initio*”: Ambrose, *Secundum Lucam*, 1:5, CCSL 14,

Bede reinforced the connection between gold and the New Testament and used the precious material as an image for disclosing the enigmatic nature of Scripture:

An enigma is an obscure thought through a hidden similitude of things, like “the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her pinions with yellow gold (Ps 67:14),” which may signify that the language of Scripture is full of divine spiritual light, but its inner meaning gleams with the greater beauty of the heavenly wisdom; or it may signify that although the present life of the holy church rejoices in the wings of virtue, the life that is to come, which is in heaven, will enjoy eternal splendor with the Lord.²⁶⁷

He used the reference to gold contained in the Old Testament to give examples of allegories and their higher possibilities in engaging with the splendor of the church to come. The paradox of the golden word, Bede ultimately implied, consists in revealing its anagogical sense at the same moment in which the text appears enigmatic and obscure.²⁶⁸

In the display script, the gold triangle in the letter “Q” faces an ornamental page that visually exposes the paradox that the spiritual understanding of Scripture engages. No gold appears at the center of the Luke carpet page, but there is instead a cross that is revealed and hidden at the same time. The idea of absence explored in the ambiguous layouts of the Luke carpet page will be enhanced in the ornament of the

ed. Marcus Adriaen (Turnhout: Brepols, 1977), p. 8, cols. 70-71; trans. Ide M. Ni Riain, p. 4; idem, ch. 5, p. 8 for the discussion on the Word that needs to be perceived with the eyes rather than the ears.

²⁶⁷ “Aenigma est obscura sententia per occultam similitudinem rerum, ut: ‘Pennae columbae deargentate, et posteriora dorsi eius in specie auri,’ cum significet eloquia Scripturae spiritalis divino lumine plena, sensum vero eius interiorem maiori caelestis sapientiae gratia refulgentem, vel certe vitam sanctae ecclesiae praesentem, virtutum pennis gaudentem, futuram autem, quae in caelis est, aeterna cum Domino claritate fruituram”: Bede, “De Schematibus et Tropis,” in *De Arte Metrica et De Schematibus et Tropis*, ed. Calvin B. Kendall, CCSL 123A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975), bk. 2, ch. 2, pp. 162-63, cols. 191-98; cited and discussed by Martin Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: “Grammatica” and Literary Theory 350-1100* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 294; on the rhetorical figure of *aenigma* the literature is vast: *The Old English Riddles of the Exeter Book*, ed. Craig Williamson (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977); *Aldhelm: The Poetic Works*, ed. and trans. Michael Lapidge and James L. Rosier (Dover, NH: Boydell & Brewer, 1985), 61-94; Jonathan Wilcox, “‘Tell me what I am:’ The Old English Riddles,” in *Readings in Medieval Texts: Interpreting Old and Middle English Literature*, ed. David F. Johnson and Elaine M. Treharne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 46-49; Tilghman, “On the Enigmatic Nature.”

²⁶⁸ Tilghman “Symbolic Use,” 137.

Evangelist John; the ornament of the Evangelist who best had seen the Word also exposes the most cryptic construction of the cross.

The John Carpet Page

Four quadrangular inlays placed around the central cross provide the page with a symmetrical and balanced organization (fol. 210v, fig. 89).²⁶⁹ The effect is created by repeating concentric quadrangular frames: the external border encloses an internal frame divided at the center by a cross, thereby featuring four quadrangles that each includes a quadrangular enamel inlay. Along with this sense of formal stability, the John carpet also highlights the living nature of the ornament. It shows a carpet of interwoven peacock-like animals inspired by metalwork patterns as seen in the Matthew, Mark, and Luke carpet pages. On the John page, the intricacy of the animals' bodies covers almost the entire pictorial surface, providing a physical and corporeal presence in the visual ornament. Living bodies are also discernible in Matthew's ornament; there are, however, differences between the constructions and features of the two ornamental pages. The animals in the John carpet page have large wings colored with yellow, red, and pink, a variety of colors that distinguishes them from the representations of the flying animals in the background of the Matthew page, where the colors pink and blue are emphasized. The terrestrial animals in the latter do not appear in the John carpet page, in which the pattern replaces quadrupeds with a large number of winged animals.

The selection of peacock-like creatures in John accords with the exegetical tradition which maintained that John was able to see the mystery of Christ's nature

²⁶⁹ Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society*, 330-31; on the geometric construction of the page: Stevick, *Earliest Irish*, 197-200.

more closely than the other Evangelists.²⁷⁰ The colorful feathers were mentioned in exegesis to comment on the most philosophical of the Gospels. Augustine provided the image of the colorful feathers as one of the most suitable to evoke the beauty and depth of the Gospel of John.²⁷¹ Reading the opening verses of the Gospel of John, Augustine expressed the depth of his thought by describing the beauty of the feathers of the peacocks. Augustine remained silent about the reasons of the resemblance between the feathers and the Gospel of John, but the Carolingian interpretation of the Augustinian passage paralleled the variety of colors of the feathers with the infinite number of ways one may interpret Scripture.²⁷²

The living, corporeal structure of the page recalls the Matthew carpet, but John's ornament is focused not so much on a material cross as on an empty one. The interwoven animals cover the entire surface of the framed page; the central cross and other four T-shaped crosses appear as spaces opened in the surface of the ornament. Light yellow and dark brown inks create interlaced decorations that fill the crosses, giving the effect of a flat textile surface. The crosses seen in the negative space provide the ornament of the John carpet page with a three-dimensional effect that is

²⁷⁰ Because the eagle was able to fly, more than the terrestrial symbols of the other Evangelists the symbol of John could see into to the sun (Ez 1:4–12; Rev 4:6–8), see Jennifer O'Reilly, "St. John as a Figure of the Contemplative Life: Text and Image in the Art of the Anglo-Saxon Benedictine Reform," in *St. Dunstan his Life, Times, and Cult*, ed. Nigel Ramsay, Margaret Sparks and Tim Tatton-Brown (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1992), 165–85; Hamburger, *St. John the Divine*; Jennifer O'Reilly, "St. John the Evangelist: Between Two Worlds," in *Insular & Anglo-Saxon Art and Thought in the Early Medieval Period*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 2011): 189–202, at 190.

²⁷¹ Augustine, "Tractate III," in *In Iohannis*, PL 35, col. 1398: "Quanta pulchritudo est in pennis pavonis?"

²⁷² John Scottus Eriugena, *Periphyseon*, PL 122, ch. 4, col. 749C: "Est enim multiplex et infinitus divinatorum eloquiorum intellectus. Siquidem in penna pavonis una eademque mirabilis ac pulchra innumerabilium colorum varietas conspicitur in uno eodemque loco eiusdem pennae portiunculae"; Cassiodorus extended the argument to the entire Bible and described the beautiful words contained in the Psalms as varied as the multiple colors of the eyes that decorate the wings of the peacocks: Cassiodorus, "De Psalterio," in *Institutiones*, bk. 1, ch. 4:5, PL 70, cols. 1115C–D: "Psalterium est enim quaedam coelestis sphaera, stellis densa micantibus, et (ut ita dixerim) quidam pavo pulcherrimus, qui velut oculorum orbibus et colorum multiplici et decora varietate depingitur; paradus quinetiam animarum, poma continens innumera, quibus suaviter mens humana saginata pinguescat"; see *Cassiodorus: Institutions of Divine and Secular Learning. On the Soul*, trans. James W. Halporn and Mark Vessey (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), 121.

visible in the enameled inlays of the other pages as well. In the case of the John carpet page, however, the plastic effect is extended to the entire page evoking a cover in its general layout.²⁷³

Such material effect is reinforced by comparison with other works of art. The closest visual parallel to the design of the John carpet page can be found in the Insular book shrine known as the Soiscél Molaise (Dublin, National Museum of Ireland, R.4006, fig. 90).²⁷⁴ The layout of the shrine is constructed around a cross with four inlaid panels representing the Evangelist symbols. The John carpet page presents an abstract version of the shrine's layout, replacing the symbols with geometrical glass inlays. Made for enclosing a manuscript, most likely a Gospel book, the shrine was probably begun in the late eighth century and was added to in the eleventh and fifteenth centuries. Because of the several interventions the object has received throughout the centuries, we cannot reconstruct the original features of the book shrine. However, a comparison between the two works of art reveals how the technical process of creating flat interlaced crosses that seem to appear in the negative space highlights, in both the carpet page and the shrine, the role of the ornament in hiding while simultaneously revealing the cross constructed by the harmony of the Gospels. John's ornament stresses the paradox of the unseen divine Word. The Evangelist who has most clearly apprehended the Word is also the one who enshrines and closes the book of the Gospels. The closed book was related to the Gospel of John because of the belief established since the third century that the sealed book was

²⁷³ Baschet, "L'Image-Objet," 5-57.

²⁷⁴ Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society*, 208-13; Paul Mullarkey, "The Figural Iconography of the 'Soiscéal Molaise' and Stowe Missal Book Shrine," in *Making and Meaning*, 50-69.

taken to be the Old Testament, whose spiritual meaning, unlocked by the New, would be manifest at the end of time.²⁷⁵

The Carpet Pages and the Ambiguities of the Word

The layouts of the carpet pages change slightly through the manuscript, presenting different relationships between the interlace and the enamel-like inlays. The Jerome and Matthew carpet pages clearly display jeweled crosses at their centers, while the ornamental pages of Mark, Luke, and John reveal the crosses as signs created in the negative spaces. The ornamental pages introducing the Mark and Luke Gospels enhance this effect, which reaches a culmination with the John carpet page. The John carpet page is focused on a central cross that opens access to an empty space through which the beholder is able to see the interlace of the ground. Although it is difficult to establish a precise link between the ornament and the character of the respective Gospels, the differences in the general layout seems to follow a progression, albeit an imperfect one, from the material gemmed cross in the Jerome carpet toward the pure sign visible at the center of the ornament for the Gospel of John.

As he did in the Evangelist portraits, in the carpet pages the illuminator constructed material objects as geometric shapes; in the latter, however, the relationships between the pure geometric shapes and the fictive materials are more complicated. In the ornament lozenges, squares, and crosses are hidden throughout

²⁷⁵ Victorinus, *Commentarius in Apocalypsin*; Köhler, *karolingischen Miniaturen*, 109 and 136; Caecilia Davis-Weyer, “‘Aperit quod ipse Signaverat Testamentum’: Lamm und Löwe im Apokalypsebild der Grandval-Bible,” in *Studien zur mittelalterlichen Kunst, 800-1250: Festschrift für Florentine Mutherich*, ed. Katharina Bierbrauer, Peter K. Klein and Willibald Sauerländer (Munich: Prestel, 1985), 67-74; Paul Meyvaert, “A New Perspective on the Ruthwell Cross: *Ecclesia* and *Vita Monastica*,” in *The Ruthwell Cross*, ed. Brendan Cassidy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 95-166; Kessler, “*Facies Bibliothecae*,” 560-61.

the interlace and can be seen in foreground or background depending on the beholder's perception. When the viewer looks at the ornament in comparison with the figures of the Evangelists and with the letters contained in the text of the Gospels, the ornament itself appears fluid and transformative—in Bede's words, as "a living reading of the Lord's story".²⁷⁶ The perfect geometric forms underlying material things cannot provide easy access to the invisible. A viewer of the ornament faces struggle and uncertainty as part of the pleasure of looking at colors and harmonious lines.

Ambiguity and obscurity were rhetorical figures used to describe words contained in Scripture when the truth of their content is difficult to access.²⁷⁷ Augustine explained that the reasons underlying such uncertainty resided in the wide semantic possibilities of words, especially when the words bear allegorical meanings. Writing an exegetical theology to guide the reader in the interpretation of the Sacred Scripture, Augustine warned Christians of the difficulties that arise in approaching the text of the Gospels:

But hasty and careless readers are led astray by many and manifold obscurities and ambiguities, substituting one meaning for another; and in some places they cannot hit upon even a fair interpretation. Some of the expressions are so obscure as to shroud the meaning in the thickest darkness. And I do not doubt that all this was divinely arranged for the purpose of subduing pride by toil, and of preventing a feeling of satiety in the intellect, which generally holds in small esteem what is discovered without difficulty.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁶ *De Templo* 2, ed. David Hurst, CCSL 119A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969), p. 213, as quoted in Meyvaert, "Bede and the Church Paintings," 69; the passage will be discussed further in Chapter 4 in this dissertation.

²⁷⁷ On the obscurities of biblical passages, see David Howlett, *British Books in Biblical Style* (Portland: Four Courts Press, 1997).

²⁷⁸ "Sed multis et multiplicibus obscuritatibus et ambiguitatibus decipiuntur qui temere legunt, aliud pro alio sentientes. Quibusdam autem locis quid vel falso suspicentur non inveniunt: ita obscure dicta quaedam densissimam caliginem obducunt. Quod totum provisum esse divinitus non dubito, ad edomandam labore superbiam et intellectum a fastidio renovandum, cui facile investigata plerumque vilescent": Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, bk. 2, ch. 6:7, trans. James J. Shaw, "On Christian Doctrine," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff (New York: Cosimo Inc., 2007), 1st series, vol. 2, ch. 6, p. 537.

The passage is taken from a section of the text that discusses the figurative language of Scripture. The process Augustine describes of the unfulfilled search for the deeper senses of the Word is a process that the carpet pages engage visually, establishing transformative connections with both the letters and the figures. The ornament parallels Augustine's words in that they show the ambiguities contained in the Gospels. These ambiguities in turn, following Augustine's thought, were divine tricks secretly hidden in the text that stimulate the beholder to look for meanings that ultimately cannot be found in the present. They provide the intellectual pleasure that comes from the insatiable search for the divine by looking at transformative materials that force the beholder to keep searching for something else. Imitation glass and metals evoke something that is not in actually in the ornament; similarly the crosses transform into geometric signs, the interlace into animals, the animals into metalwork; crosses are hidden and revealed throughout the ornament, making the beholder's mind thirst for the knowledge of the Word.

Chapter 4

Versus Intexti: Weaving Words and Images

Textiles as Metaphor of the Obscurity of Christ's Dual Nature

Knots, interwoven threads, and interlace recur throughout the five carpet pages (figs. 5–9). Previous scholars have highlighted the ornament's inspiration in textile design, but they have paid less attention to the fact that mimicked textiles provide the ornament with several meanings.²⁷⁹ The carpet pages use textile imagery to present arguments about the anagogical function of material images, showing how pictorial arts encourage interpretations of the incarnate Word while also exposing the limits of that intellectual process. Looking at the ways the textile patterns of the ornamental pages challenge the beholder's perception, Jean-Claude Bonne understood the intricacy of the Book of Durrow's opening cross carpet page as a composition of entangled lines that the viewer must disentangle in order to see the cross (Dublin, Trinity College, MS A.4.5.(57), fol. 1v, fig. 91).²⁸⁰ This chapter relies on Bonne's hermeneutical approach and explores the function of the ornament in light of works of art and texts known in eighth-century Northumbria that interpreted the act of weaving as a metaphor for the human understanding of letters as well as paintings. The carpet pages evoke veils and fabrics as discussed in the Bible and exegesis to celebrate the role of the arts within the monastic practice of ruminating on and digesting the Word

²⁷⁹ The act of weaving is implied in the description of the ornament as carpet pages. Threads, interlace, and intricacy are terms that repeatedly appear in the publications on the ornamental pages. See, for example, Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels. Society*, 319; Mildred Budny, "Deciphering the Art of Interlace," in *From Ireland Coming*, 197; Bonne, "Intrications," 75-108; Jean-Claude Bonne, "Noeuds d'Écriture (Le Fragment I de l'Évangilaire de Durham)," in *Text-Image, Bild-Text*, ed. Sybil Dümichen and Michael Nerlich (Berlin: Technische Universität, 1990), 85-105; Tilghman, "Symbolic Use"; Blanc, *Textes et Textiles*; Dominique Barbet-Massin, *L'Enluminure et le Sacré. Irlande, Grande-Bretagne, VII^e-VIII^e Siècles* (Paris: Presses Universitaires Paris-Sorbonne, 2012), 248-64.

²⁸⁰ Jean-Claude Bonne, "Relève de l'Ornementation Celte Païenne dans un Évangile Insulaire du VII^e Siècle (les Évangiles de Durrow)," in *Ideologie e Pratiche del Reimpiego nell'Alto Medioevo* (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1999), 1011-1053; idem, "De L'Ornemental," 233-240.

of the Gospels. Precious materials shine and please the senses, but they cannot fulfill the human desire to comprehend the paradox of the Word made flesh.

The general layout of the ornament, from the Jerome carpet page to the John carpet page, evokes veils and crosses and might have reminded viewers of the Temple veil that was torn asunder at the Crucifixion. Crosses divide the center of each of the carpet pages recalling the opening of the veil, an event that the Matthew portrait also represents by displaying the red curtain opened to the side.²⁸¹ In the Gospels, both cross and veil play essential roles in revealing Christ's human and divine nature. By means of textiles, the Evangelists Matthew (27:51), Mark (15:38), and Luke (23:45) all gave evidence that the man on the cross was the Son of God. The Evangelist Mark who dedicated one third of his Gospel to the events of Christ's last days, introduced the Temple veil immediately after Christ's death with these words:

Jesus having cried a loud voice, gave up the ghost. And the veil of the Temple was rent in two, from the top to the bottom. And the centurion who stood over against him, seeing that crying out in this manner he had given up the ghost, said: "Indeed this man was the Son of God" (Mk 15:37–39).²⁸²

In the Gospels the opening of the veil of God's dwelling immediately follows Christ's death and reveals his divine nature, probably alluding to the tearing of the heavens at Christ's baptism (Mk 1:10).²⁸³ According to the Gospels, the opening of the curtain of the Temple unveiled the mystery of Christ's dual nature. The Epistle to the Hebrews likened Christ's body to a veil (Heb 10:20); the carpet pages recall the living veil in their ornament. By turning the interlocking threads into bodies of living beings, the

²⁸¹ Chapter 1 in this dissertation; on the pictorial tradition of the veil see Eberlein, *Apparitio Regis*; Kessler, "Through the Temple Veil"; Wolf, *Schleier und Spiegel*; Krüger, *Das Bild als Schleier*.

²⁸² "Jesus autem emissa voce magna expiravit. Et velum templi scissum est in duo, a summo usque deorsum. Videns autem centurio, qui ex adverso stabat, quia sic clamans expirasset, ait: Vere hic homo Filius Dei erat."

²⁸³ Daniel M. Gurtner, "The Rending of the Veil and Markan Christology: "Unveiling" the *ΥΙΟΣ ΘΕΟΥ* (Mark 15:38-39)," *Biblical Interpretation* 15 (2007): 292-306; idem, *The Torn Veil: Matthew's Exposition of the Death of Jesus* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

carpet pages that introduce each of the Gospel texts manifest the idea that Christ's incarnation is a process of transformation.²⁸⁴ The ornament that embellishes the Gospel of Matthew, the Evangelist who most emphasized Christ's humanity by beginning his text with the genealogy of Christ (Mt 1:1–17), more clearly displays animals' bodies, eyes, beaks, and feet, animating the threads of the textile (fig. 92). Interwining animals cover the entire surface of the John carpet page and enhance the Word made flesh described in the opening of his Gospel (Jn 1:1, fig. 89).

The carpet pages further explore the ways textiles were understood in the New Testament as a method of access to the heavenly realm. The ornament encourages the beholder to see through the animated veil and discern the crosses and geometric shapes that appear in the background. Allowing the beholder to see through the living veil of Christ's body, the ornament might reflect the passage of the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb 10:19–20) that invites the faithful to enter God's dwelling through the veil that is Christ's body:

Having therefore, brethren, a confidence in the entering into the holies by the blood of Christ; a new and living way which he hath dedicated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh...²⁸⁵

In the John carpet page the crosses are cut out of a veil of interlocking animals. The fact that the Gospel of John makes the beholder look through the animated veil finds explanation in the text of the Epistle to the Hebrews and in its exegesis.²⁸⁶ The text (Heb 10:1–18) explains that Christ replaced the sacrifices of the Old Testament and freed humanity from sin. Christ's incarnation established a New Covenant between

²⁸⁴ The Jerome carpet page on folio 2v does not show any living beings.

²⁸⁵ “Habentes itaque, fratres, fiduciam in introitu sanctorum in sanguine Christi, quam initiavit nobis viam novam, et viventem per velamen, id est, carnem suam...”

²⁸⁶ Otfried Hofius, “Inkarnation und Opfertod Jesu nach Hebr 10,19f.,” in *Der Ruf Jesu und die Antwort der Gemeinde: Exegetische Untersuchungen Joachim Jeremias zum 70. Geburtstag gewidmet von seinen Schülern*, ed. Eduard Lohse et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 132–41; David M. Moffitt, “Unveiling Jesus' Flesh: A Fresh Assessment of the Relationship between the Veil and Jesus' Flesh in Hebrews 10:20,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 37/1 (2010): 71–84.

man and God as a fulfillment of God's will as "it is written in the head of the book" (Heb 10:7). Sedulius Scottus commented on the complex text and clarified that, in a way different from the sacrifices in the Old Testament, Christ's flesh could liberate man from his sins and open the entrance to the Holy of Holies because the truth of Christ's incarnation was already foretold.²⁸⁷ Christ's human nature, Sedulius Scottus clarified, was announced in the Book of Genesis and the Gospel of John, as well as in the opening of the Gospel of Matthew. Quoting the words "*In principio*" that opens the first book of the Bible, the Gospel of John made the incarnation of the pre-existent *Logos* evident. Perhaps influenced by Sedulius, whose writings were available in Northumbria, the designer recognized the Gospel of John as the most suitable to expose in its ornament the possibilities for Christians to approach the entrance to heaven through the veil.²⁸⁸

Showing crosses and shapes that appear in the negative space, the ornament causes the beholder to experience difficulty and struggle when he tries to understand whether or not the mimicked textile is actually revealing what is behind it.²⁸⁹ The carpet pages capture the textile's material qualities of covering and uncovering the enameled inlays. These visual ambiguities might reflect the fact that the Gospels suggest that the visibility of the incarnate Christ had changed with the opening of the veil, but remained obscure about the ways the torn veil affected the experience of

²⁸⁷ Sedulius Scottus, *In Epistolam ad Hebraeos*, ch. 10, PL 103, col. 265C: "*Impossibile est enim [sanguine taurorum et hircorum auferri peccata]* (Heb 10:3). Si impossibile, cur ergo faciebant propter praefigurationem? Non enim veritas sine praeecuntibus figuris venire debuit. Introiens in mundum. Christus apparens in carne. [...] Tunc dixi. Dum tempus fuit, ut auferrentur umbrae legalium hostiarum. In capite libri scriptum est de me. In fronte Geneseos, ut: *In principio creavit Deus coelum et terram*. Item: *In principio erat Verbum*, et illud: *Liber generationis Jesu Christi*; et item: *Beatus vir, qui non abiit in consilio impiorum*." Ibid., col. 266a: "Unde nos plus habemus fiduciam per sanguinem Christi mundari, quam illi qui carnaliter hostias offerebant. In introitum sanctorum. In introitum regni coelestis, vel fidei: Quam initiavit nobis. Consecravit, eo quod ipse primus illa via propria carne conscendit in coelos. Viam novam. Aut fidem Christi, aut introitum regni coelestis."

²⁸⁸ Moffitt, "Unveiling Jesus' Flesh," 71-84.

²⁸⁹ Chapter 3 in this dissertation.

seeing. The Evangelists did not describe the veil within the Herodian Temple that stood in Jerusalem at the time of the Crucifixion, nor did they provide further explanations about what would be visible behind the curtain after its rending.²⁹⁰ Even the identification of the veil was a matter of debate. Jerome, for instance, explained that there were two veils in the Temple, one hanging before the Holy place, and the other before the Holy of Holies.²⁹¹ It was unclear whether the veil mentioned in the Gospels was the interior veil or the exterior one. Jerome asked this question explicitly and resolved that the Gospels referred to the outer veil; when the outer veil was opened, what appeared was another veil, the curtain hanging from the Holy of Holies.²⁹² In turn, the doubts about the identification of the veil worked as positive arguments for asserting that the curtain was an obstacle for the human intellect encountering the divine. The textiles provided a suitable metaphor for envisioning the difficulty of seeing the Holy of Holies with bodily eyes. In Jerome's words:

It might be asked, which veil of the Temple was rent, the outer or the inner? It seems to me that in the Lord's passion that veil was rent which in the Tabernacle and Temple was outside, and was called the outer veil. Because we now see in part, and know in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then the inner veil too is to be burst asunder, that we may see all those mysteries of the house of God which are now hidden from us.²⁹³

The text maintains that it is impossible in the present time to know the secrets hidden behind the veil of the Holy of Holies because they are kept locked in the Heavenly

²⁹⁰ Daniel M. Gurtner, "The Veil of the Temple in History and Legend," *JETS* 49/1 (March 2006), 97-114.

²⁹¹ Jerome, "Epistula cxx: Ad Hedibiam," in *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae*, CSEL 55, 120:8, ed. Isidorus Hilberg (Vienna: F. Tempsky; Leipzig: G. Freytag, 1910), pp. 489-92.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 489-92.

²⁹³ "Et quaerendum, quod velum templi scissum sit, exterius an interius. Mihique videtur in passione Domini illud velum esse conscissum, quod et in tabernaculo et in templo foris positum fuit et appellabatur exterius, "quia nunc ex parte videmus et ex parte cognoscimus; cum autem venerit quod perfectum est," (1 Cor 13:9-10) tunc etiam velum interius dirumpendum, ut omnia, quae nunc nobis nascondita sunt, domus Dei sacramenta videamus." Jerome, "Epistula cxx," in *Epistulae*, CSEL 55, 120:8,6, ed. Isidorus Hilberg, p. 490 line 21-p. 491 line 4, trans. and discussed by Edward F. Willis, *The Worship of the Old Covenant Considered More Especially in Relation to that of the New* (Oxford: James Parker & Co, 1880), p. 252.

Jerusalem.²⁹⁴ Jerome's position was highly influential, but the exegetical tradition also recognized the torn veil as the curtain that opens the *Sancta Sanctorum* itself. Bede, for instance, commented on the Gospels and understood the torn veil to be the interior one, because, at its rending, the Ark of the Covenant hidden in the Holy of Holies became visible.²⁹⁵ Although there was no agreement about the definition of the exact veil that was opened at the Crucifixion, a general consensus appears in the discussions of the function of the rent veil as an image of the limits of the human knowledge before the divine. Even the Fathers of the Church found the passage of the torn veil puzzling and unclear, making Augustine declare: "This is such a great mystery! An ineffable secret!"²⁹⁶

The fact that the carpet pages decorate a Gospel book might be a reflection of the ways in which the New Testament presented the veil as an intellectual obstacle not only for Moses, but also for those who recognized the revelation of Christ's divinity after the opening of the Temple. The Second Epistle to the Corinthians (2 Cor 3:13–16, 4:3) equated the veil with the Gospels and employed textile imagery to articulate the complex relationship between the Old and the New Testament. The New Testament described how the Hebrew Bible is covered with the fabric of the

²⁹⁴ Jerome, "Ad Hedibiam," *CSEL* 55, 8:6, ed. Hilberg, p. 491, lines 6-9: "Nunc enim per speculum videmus in imagine' (1 Cor 12) et, cum historiae nobis velum scissum sit, ut ingrediamur atrium Dei, tamen secreta eius et universa mysteria, quae in coelesti Hierusalem clausa retinentur, scire non possumus."

²⁹⁵ "Et velum templi scissum est in duo a sursum usque deorsum. Scinditur velum templi, ut arca testamenti et omnia legis sacramenta, quae tegebantur, appareant." Bede, *In Marci Evangelium Expositio*, ch. 15, *PL* 92, col. 292A; Lawrence Nees, "Theodulf's Mosaic at Germigny, the *Sancta Sanctorum*, and Jerusalem," in *Discovery and Distinction in the Early Middle Ages. Studies in Honor of John J. Contreni* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2013), 167-86.

²⁹⁶ Augustine interpreted the torn veil in light of the veil that Moses coming down from Mount Sinai with the tablets (Ex 34:35) had to "put over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what [the radiance of his face] was fading away" (2 Cor 3:13). He linked this passage to the opening of the Temple veil at the Crucifixion and following the Second Letter to the Corinthians explained that those who convert to Christ take off the fabric that covers Moses' face. Augustine highlighted the connection between the veil on the face of Moses and the Temple veil, then he suddenly suspended his chain of exegetical texts and wrote: "O magnum mysterium! O ineffabile sacramentum!": Augustine, "Ex Sermone de Sabbato," in *Sermones*, *PL* 39, col. 1734.

veil, preventing the Jews from a full comprehension of the Word made flesh of the Gospels. The Second Epistle to the Corinthians interpreted the veil as a hermeneutical impediment making Christians the only people capable of a spiritual understanding of Scripture. Jerome, Augustine, and Bede among others linked the torn veil at the Crucifixion to the veil that covers the eyes of the Jews and envisioned the opening of the veil as the disclosure of hidden secrets and mysteries already contained in the Old Testament.²⁹⁷ The entire building of the Temple shared the mysterious and impenetrable nature of the veil. In his preface to the homilies on Ezekiel, the influential Gregory the Great noted that Ezekiel's vision of the Temple was veiled in a cloud of obscurity.²⁹⁸ In *De Templo*, Bede assimilated Gregory's arguments about the impossibility of understanding along with a number of features concerning the Temple's architecture.²⁹⁹ In Insular art as well as in Bede's works, the veil and God's dwelling were indications to reflect on the role of material objects made by hands as expression of the human possibilities and limits in facing the image of the divine.³⁰⁰

Painting as Living Writing

A material cross and the Jewish Tabernacle furnishings appear in the carpet

²⁹⁷ Jerome, "Ad Hebidiam," *CSEL* 55, 120:8,5, ed. Hilberg, p. 490, lines 15-16: "Velum scissus sit in duas partes a summo usque deorsum: et omnia legis sint revelata mysteria"; Augustine, "Sermone de Sabbato," *PL* 35, col. 1734: "Sed Iudaei etiam discisso velo coopertam habent faciem. Nos autem, ait apostolus, revelata facie gloriam Dei speculantes, in eadem imagine transformamur de gloria in gloriam, tanquam Domini Spiritu"; Bede, *De Tabernaculo*, bk. 1, ch. 9, *CCSL* 119A, ed. David Hurst: "Et morendo in cruce velum templi discidit, atque ea quae tecta fuerant arcana sanctorum patefecit: et post resurrectionem discipulis apparens, aperuit illis sensum, ut et haec et alia scripturarum secreta spiritualiter revelatis oculis mentis perspicere possent."

²⁹⁸ Gregory the Great, "Preface," in *Homilies on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, trans. Theodosia Tomkinson (Etna Calif.: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2008), bk. 2, p. 258.

²⁹⁹ See the introduction by Jennifer O'Reilly in Connolly ed., *On the Temple*, pp. xxvi-xxviii.

³⁰⁰ The themes of the Tabernacle and the Temple reappear throughout Bede's exegetical writings: *De Tabernaculo* (c.721-25), *In Esram et Neemiam* (c.725-31), *De Templo* (c.729-31), and the Homilies 2.1, 2.24, 2.25; see also Joachim E. Gaehde, "Carolingian Interpretations of an Early Christian Picture Cycle to the Octateuch in the Bible of San Paolo Fuori le Mura in Rome," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 8 (1974): 351-84.

pages (see the Matthew carpet page, fig. 6) and the miniature of the Tabernacle in the Codex Amiatinus (fig. 38). They emphasize the anagogical function of material images and the pictures' ability to manifest Christ's incarnation, while also evoking his ineffable and invisible divinity. The general layout of the ornamental pages with a quadrangular frame and a cross at the center recalls the structure of the Tabernacle in the Codex Amiatinus, which displays a plan made of concentric quadrangles with a small cross at the entrance of the Holy of Holies.³⁰¹ The Codex Amiatinus contains the illumination of the Tabernacle closest in time and place to the production of the Lindisfarne Gospels. Revel–Neher and Chazelle have pointed out that the Tabernacle in the Codex Amiatinus is a precise rendering of the building as described in Exodus (Ex 25:1–27:19): it shows a doorway on the east that leads into an outer chamber that contains a seven-branched lampstand, the table of showbread and the altar of incense; inside the Holy of Holies stands the Ark of the Covenant surmounted by two winged cherubim, and in front of the Tabernacle the illuminator painted the altar of burnt offerings along with the bronze laver, in which the priests wash themselves.³⁰² The miniature features the Tabernacle with a cross, representing the building after Christ's incarnation and renders the Jewish props as plastic, three-dimensional objects.³⁰³ The bird's-eye view of the composition allows the beholder to see the Ark of the Covenant inside the Holy of Holies, showing the mercy seat from which the voice of God

³⁰¹ Also the *Christian Topography* (Cod. Sin. gr. 1186, fol. 82v) provides a geometric schema for the holy dwelling of the divinity, showing the courtyard and the tent at its center both rendered as quadrangular surfaces. On the pictorial tradition of the Tabernacle, see Elisabeth Revel-Neher, *L'Arche d'Alliance dans l'Art Juif et Chrétien du Second au Dixième Siècles: le Signe de la Rencontre* (Paris: Associations des Amis des Études Archéologiques Byzantino-slaves et du Christianisme Oriental, 1984); Kessler, "Through the Temple Veil," 53-77; Elisabeth Revel-Neher, *Le Témoignage de l'Absence: Les Objets du Sanctuaire à Byzance et dans l'Art Juif du XI^e au XV^e Siècle* (Paris: De Boccard, 1998); on the Codex Amiatinus, see Elisabeth Revel-Neher, "Du Codex Amiatinus et Ses Rapports avec les Plans du Tabernacle dans l'Art Juif et dans l'Art Byzantin," *Journal of Jewish Art* 9 (1982): 6-17; Chazelle, "Painting the Voice of God," 15-59.

³⁰² Revel-Neher, "Codex Amiatinus," 6-17; Chazelle, "Painting the Voice of God," 44-59; Kühnel, *From the Earthly to the Heavenly Jerusalem*, 158-60; idem, "Jewish Symbolism," 147-68.

³⁰³ Chapter 2 in this dissertation.

speaks with the cherubims facing each other and hiding from the beholder's view (fig. 43).³⁰⁴ Chazelle argued that one of the main themes displayed in the Codex Amiatinus is the hiddenness of God from physical sight, both under the Old Testament and in the present age of the Church awaiting Christ's return.³⁰⁵

The visual comparison of the illumination of the Tabernacle in the Codex Amiatinus with the carpet pages shows the ways in which in both works the dwelling place of the divinity had changed its features after Christ's incarnation, providing material images but keeping the image of God invisible. The carpet pages replace Jewish liturgical objects with Christian works of art, since the opening of the veil shows an enameled cross rather than the Old Testament furnishings described in the Bible and featured in the Tabernacle of the Codex Amiatinus.³⁰⁶ In both Insular art and exegesis, the opening of the veil became an important tool for reflecting on the effect of Christ's incarnation on the role of the material objects. Bede explained that the Tabernacle furnishings that were hidden behind the veil, and therefore concealed to the Jews, became visible to all those who believed because of Christ's incarnation:

The veil signifies the time under the Law, because the things that the Law and the prophets declared were still obscure: but through the passion of Christ, the veil is torn and the things that were obscure to the Jews, were revealed to Christians. So the instruction of the silver feet and the golden tablets were clearer to the apostles than to the prophets.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁴ Chazelle, "Painting the Voice of God," 44. Chazelle stresses the reference to Josephus who explained that no man had ever seen the cherubims, see *Antiquities* 3.6.137, p. 235: "super tegmen vero eius erant figurationes duae, quas Hebraei Cherubim appellant. Sunt enim animalia volatilia habentia figuram quae a nullo homine est inspecta."

³⁰⁵ Chazelle, "Painting the Voice of God," 15-59.

³⁰⁶ During the Iconoclastic controversy the replacement of Christian works of art for Jewish liturgical objects was an authoritative argument for defenders of images recalling that God himself had ordained physical objects. For the vast literature, see Leslie Brubaker and John F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclastic Era: A History* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011). On the specific arguments relating to Jewish *vasa sacra*, see Herbert L. Kessler, "Judaism and the Development of Byzantine Art," in *Jews of Byzantium: Dialectics of Minority and Majority Cultures*, ed. Roberto Bonfil et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 457-502; idem, "Shaded with Dust: Jewish Eyes on Christian Art," in *Judaism and Christian Art: Aesthetic Anxieties from the Catacombs to Colonialism*, ed. Herbert L. Kessler and David Nirenberg (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 74-114.

³⁰⁷ "Potest quoque velum hoc significare tempus illud quod fuit sub lege; quia quae lex et prophetae cecinerunt, occulta fuerunt: sed per passionem Christi velum istud scissum est, et quae fuerunt

For Christians, the furnishings appeared clearer because the opening of the veil brought the responsibility of seeing the spiritual meaning of the objects made by human hands. In his text on the Tabernacle, Bede listed the materials that Moses had to take for constructing the dwelling of God, including gold, silver, bronze, red and blue fabrics (Ex 25:3–8), and explained:

All these things that the Lord directed to be offered to him in a material fashion for the making of a sanctuary by the people of earlier times should also be offered with spiritual understanding by us who desire to be the spiritual children of Israel, that is imitators of the people who saw God.³⁰⁸

Bede discussed the materials used by Moses to construct the sacred building as a means to demonstrate that for Christians the use of material images would have acquired a moral and spiritual charge.

Bede returned to the arguments about the Jewish props in his work on the Temple and summed up several arguments also relevant to the carpet pages, such as the effect of Christ's incarnation on the function of material images, the cross as a sign of Christ's triumph, and the interpretation of painting as living writing. As Paul Meyvaert has demonstrated, Bede took part in the debate on images when he reacted to Byzantine iconoclasm in his Temple of Solomon.³⁰⁹ This commentary on the Temple was written shortly before 731. Bede received a visit at about this time from his friend Nothhelm, who brought him copies of the letters of Gregory the Great from Rome. Meyvaert therefore suggested that it is very possible that Nothhelm also brought news from Rome of the iconoclastic movement, which was just beginning to

obscurata Judaeis, Christianis revelata sunt. Quod autem argenteae bases, et tabulae deauratae, ostendit praecepta esse clariora apostolorum quam prophetarum": Pseudo-Bede, *In Pentateuchum*, bk. 2, ch. 26, *PL* 91, col. 323D.

³⁰⁸ "Cuncta haec quae Dominus sibi a priore populo, ad faciendum sanctuarium materialiter offerri praecipit; nos quoque qui spirituales filii Israel, id est, imitatores Deum videntis populi esse desideramus, spirituali intelligentia debemus offerre, quatenus per huiusmodi oblationes voluntarias, et ipsi sanctuarium ei in nobis facere mereamur, et ipse in medio nostrum habitare, hoc est in nostro sibi corde mansionem consecrare dignetur": Bede, *De Tabernaculo*, bk. 1:3, trans. Arthur Holder, p. 8.

³⁰⁹ Meyvaert, "Bede and the Church Paintings," 63-77.

develop in the East. Bede responded to the iconoclasts:

At this point it should be noted that there are some who believe that God's law forbids us to sculpture or to paint, whether in a church or any other place, the figures of men or animals or the likeness of any other object. [...] Now if it was permissible to lift up the brazen serpent on a piece of wood so that the Israelites who behold it might live, why should it not be allowable to recall to the memory of the faithful, by a painting, that exaltation of our Lord Saviour on the cross through which he conquered death, and also his other miracles and healings through which he wonderfully triumphed over the same author of death, and especially since their sight is wont also to produce a feeling of great compunction in the beholder, and since they open up, as it were, a living reading of the Lord's story for those who cannot read? The Greek word for *pictura* is indeed *zoographia*, that is "living writing."³¹⁰

Probably reflecting this definition, such works as the ornamental pages in such

Gospel books as Lindisfarne (fol. 26v, fig. 92), Durrow (Dublin, Trinity College, MS.

A.4.5.(57), fol. 192v, fig. 93), and Lichfield (Lichfield Cathedral, fol. 220, fig. 94)

were filled with interlaced lines in a continuous process of transformation into snakes, peacocks and birds.

Although Bede's text is slightly later than the ornament in the Lindisfarne Gospels, the interpretation of living writing was manifested in the Isles for at least a century. One of the initials of the Psalter so-called Cathach of St. Columba (Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, Ms. 12 R.33. C, fol. 48r, fig. 95), dating to the sixth or seventh-century, is enlivened with the head of a snake that bears the cross of the victorious Christ.³¹¹ Insular illuminators reflected on the possibilities of pictorial arts to bring the

³¹⁰ "Notandum sane hoc in loco quia sunt qui putant lege Dei prohibitum ne vel hominum vel quorumlibet animalium sive rerum similitudines sculpamus aut depingamus in ecclesia vel alio [...] Si enim licebat serpentem exaltari aeneum in ligno quem aspicientes filii Israhel viverent, cur non licet exaltationem domini salvatoris in cruce qua mortem vicit ad memoriam fidelibus depingendo reduci vel etiam alia eius miracula et sanationes quibus de eodem mortis auctore mirabiliter triumphavit cum horum aspectus multum saepe compunctionis soleat praestare contuentibus et eis quoque qui litteras ignorant quasi vivam dominicae historiae pandere lectionem? Nam et pictura Graece *zoographia*, id est viva scriptura, vocatur": Bede, *De Templo* 2, ed. David Hurst, *CCSL* 119A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969), 212-13, as quoted in Meyvaert, "Bede and the Church Paintings," 68-69.

³¹¹ On the interaction between script and ornament and the merging of ornament and text in the principle of *diminuendo* in the Cathach of St. Columba see Pirotte, "Ornament and Script," 277-79; see also Carl Nordenfalk, "Before the Book of Durrow," *Acta Archaeologica* 18 (1947), 141-74; Hahn, "Letter and Spirit," 55-76; Hamburger, *Script as Image*.

word to life and displayed how colored and decorated letters could point to the corporeal substance of an incarnate God. Kendrick has provided evidence of the role of letters that take the shape of fleshy bodies and animals as a way to render visually Christ's incarnation.³¹² In the eighth-century Stockholm Codex Aureus (Stockholm, Swedish Royal Library, MS A.135, fol. 10r, fig. 96), as well as in the Lindisfarne Gospels (fol. 29r, fig. 97), bodies of living beings populate the display script of the Matthean description of the birth of Christ (Mt 1:18).³¹³ Initials especially constituted the suitable place for making letters come alive. In the Stockholm Codex Aureus, Matthew's account of the birth of Christ begins with the *chi rho* written as an "X" joined to a "P." The "X"-shaped letter is constructed with the interlacing bodies of two animals whose heads meet at the right, separating the holy name from the rest of the text, as if the letters were a separate living body. Bodies, circles, and interlace populate the ground of the display script, which itself is enlivened with colored ink. The Lindisfarne Gospels, as well as many other works of Insular art, employs interlocking and living bodies to visually render Christ's incarnation; but, populating the script with animals' bodies, the ornament also exposes the status of painting by interpreting the meaning of pictures as living writing.

Reworking the argument of the "Letter [that] kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor 3:6), the display scripts of Matthew (fol. 27r, fig. 98), Mark (fol. 95r, fig. 99), Luke (fol. 139r, fig. 100), and John (fol. 211r, fig. 101) fill with colors the letters of

³¹² Kendrick, *Animating the Letter*; see also Krasnodebska-D'Aughton, "Decoration of the *In Principio*," 105-119; Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 257; Karkov, *Art of Anglo-Saxon England*, 181-93.

³¹³ The display script reads: "Christi autem generatio sic erat: cum esset desponsata mater eius Maria Ioseph, antequam convenirent, inventa est in utero habens [de spiritu sancto]" [Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit]; Carl Nordenfalk, "A Note on the Stockholm Codex Aureus," in *History of Book Illumination*, 86-101; Richard Gameson ed., *The Codex Aureus: An Eighth-century Gospel Book: Stockholm, Kungliga Bibliotek, A.135* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 2002).

the Gospels that emerge from behind the veil of the Old Testament. The letters of the incipit of Matthew, “the book of the generation of Christ the Son of David, the son of Abraham” (Mt 1:1; fol. 27r, fig. 102), are written on a background featuring red lozenge motifs with central dots that are reminiscent of the textile coverings of the Tabernacle. The same lozenge pattern decorates the Tabernacle coverings in the *Christian Topography* (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 9.28, fol. 109r, fig. 103).³¹⁴ In a fashion different from that in the *Christian Topography*, which exhibits a catalogue of the textiles with full colors, the Lindisfarne Gospels shows a series of consecutive red dots that draw the contour of the textile decoration.³¹⁵ Throughout the five pages of the display scripts, the red dots surround the letters and appear as if they were stitches that sew the words to the parchment. The reference to the textiles of the Tabernacle provides pictorial suggestions that the Word made flesh of the Gospels is woven together with the thread of the veil. In the Second Letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor 3:13), Christians read that only in Christ is the veil of the Old Testament taken away, allowing for the possibility of a spiritual understanding of Scripture. The ornament of the incipit of Matthew asserts that belief, animating the letters emerging from the veil with colors and bodies of animals.

The red dots that constitute the pattern of the textiles appear incomplete, as if the drawing was still a work in progress, presenting the Christian interpretation of the Word as an artistic process of coloring the sketch provided by the Old Testament.³¹⁶ In the Matthew display script as well as in the other opening pages of the Gospels, the

³¹⁴ Wolska-Conus, *Cosmas Indicopleustès*; Kessler “Codex Barbarus,” 139-53.

³¹⁵ On the availability of the *Christian Topography* in the British Isles, see Bischoff and Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries*, p. 320 provided evidence that the *Topography* was a source of the Canterbury biblical commentaries which referred to the author as “*Christianus Historiographus*.”

³¹⁶ Herbert L. Kessler, “‘Pictures Fertile with Truth’: How Christians Managed to Make Images of God without Violating the Second Commandment,” *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 49/50 (1991-1992): 53-65; Tilghman, “Use of Ornament,” 25-70.

consecutive red dots of the Tabernacle coverings draw a light silhouette of the textile pattern, leaving the parchment visible inside. The red dots seem to create the visual effect of an underdrawing; in certain instances—for example in the display script of the Gospel of Mark (fig. 104)—the illuminator used juxtaposed dots to draw the pattern of the Tabernacle coverings along with the features of interweaving animals that also appear in the carpet pages. The veil evokes the sketch of a work of art, recalling the fifth-century theologian Cyril of Alexandria’s description of Jewish scripture “very much less than truth and an incomplete indication of the things signified”.³¹⁷ On the page of the Mark display script, the illuminator filled the preparatory drawings with colored letters. Again the composition recalls the ways Cyril referred to the artist’s work to explain how Christianity beautified the unfinished drawing of Jewish law:

We say that the law was a shadow and a type like unto a picture set as a thing to be viewed before those watching reality. The underdrawing (shadow) and lines are the first elements in the pictures, and if the brightness of the colors is added to these, the beauty of the picture flashes forth.³¹⁸

As Kessler has noted, Cyril substituted “underdrawing” (*skiagraphia* in Greek) for “shadow” (*skia*) in the text of Hebrews. There is good evidence that the artistic metaphor regulating the two testaments was accessible to the designer of the Lindisfarne Gospels. Cyril of Alexandria was an author well known to Bede, who cited his works several times.³¹⁹ The same image of the New Testament that fills the vague drawing of the Old Testament with bright colors appears in John Chrysostom’s

³¹⁷ Cyril of Alexandria, *Epistle* 41, 21; trans. John I. McEnerney, *St. Cyril of Alexandria. Letters 1-50* (Washington: The Catholic University Press, 1985), 180.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 180.

³¹⁹ Bede knew Cyril of Alexandria’s works and fashioned *De Temporum Ratione* and *De Computus* after Cyril of Alexandria’s calculation of Easter; see Bede, *De Temporum Ratione*, ed. Thomas Mommsen, CCSL 123B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1977), trans. Faith Wallis as *Bede: The Reckoning of Time*, Translated Texts for Historians 29 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), pp. 118 and 418.

Homilies on Hebrews.³²⁰ John Chrysostom was read at Canterbury at the end of the seventh-century, as Bernhard Bischoff and Michael Lapidge have demonstrated.³²¹ Cyril of Alexandria and John Chrysostom introduced the artistic comparison within the context of Christ's incarnation that unveils the text of the Old Testament.³²² In parallel with this exegesis, the display scripts show that Jewish scripture is likened to an artist's preliminary sketch. In contrast to the Jews, who read the Bible as a rigid written document, Christians envision it as art.

Constructing the Veil in the Beholder's Mind

The carpet pages recall the ways in which the pages of the display script show the veil of the Hebrew Bible filled with the colored letters of the Gospels. The colors added to the texts of the beginning of each of the Gospels reappear in the carpet pages to expand the set of colors of the veil as described in the Bible. The dominant red and blue palette of the carpet pages, visible especially in the Mark carpet page (fig. 7), evokes the description of the veil of the Tabernacle in the Old Testament. The Book of Exodus explains that Moses received the divine order to "make a curtain of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen, with cherubim woven into it by a skilled worker" (Ex 26:31).³²³ In the Isles, a pictorial rendering of the biblical veil was accessible, for example, in the *Christian Topography*, which features the

³²⁰ John Chrysostom, "Homily xvii on Hebrews," in *Homilies on the Gospel of St. John and the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 14, ed. Philip Shaff (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), p. 448, col. 5: "'The Law having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things,' *id est* not the very reality. For as in painting, so long as one [only] draws the outlines, it is a sort of 'shadow': but when one has added the bright paints and laid in the colors, then it becomes 'an image.' Something of this kind was also the Law."

³²¹ Bischoff and Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries*, 214-16; Alcuin listed John Chrysostom among the authors available at York in his booklist, see Donald A. Bullough, *Alcuin: Achievement and Reputation* (Boston: Brill, 2004), 206; for a discussion of these sources see Tilghman, "Symbolic Use," 51.

³²² Cyril of Alexandria, "Epistle 41," ed. and trans. John I. McEnerney, pp. 172-73; John Chrysostom, "Homily xii," ed. and trans. Philip Shaff, p. 448.

³²³ "Facies et velum de hyacintho, et purpura, coccoque bis tincto, et bysso retorta, opere plumario et pulchra varietate contextum."

Tabernacle coverings in red and blue (fol. 113r, fig. 41). In comparison with the *Christian Topography*, the illuminator of the Lindisfarne Gospels used a broader palette for his interpretation of the veil. The five carpet pages enrich the interlace of the mimicked textile with yellow, pink, green, and some white and black (figs. 5–9). The richness in colors and nuances makes the beholder realize that the ornament does not provide a precise representation of the veil of God’s dwelling. Rather, the ornament reiterates the arguments exposed in the facing display script by showing colored pigments that animate the textile pattern.³²⁴

In parallel with the veil in the display scripts, the carpet pages present certain parts without pigments and appear as if the illuminator left the painting incomplete.³²⁵ At the top margin of the Jerome carpet page the interlace are traced in brown ink on the nude parchment (fig. 105), and the uncolored interlace reappear in some lozenges in the Luke carpet page (fig. 106). If we look at the ornament in light of the arguments of the living letters visible in the facing display script, we see a similar process of addition of colors to the veil. We can look at the colored textile in line with Cyril of Alexandria’s belief that the Christian understanding of Scripture brought colors to the Hebrew Bible. The incomplete aspect of the design needs to be considered in the context of the Insular interpretation of the Tabernacle as a building that is in part constructed by means of the participation of the faithful. The carpet pages show the Latin, Greek, and Coptic crosses throughout the ornament and fuse pictorial styles shared by diverse communities, exposing the belief that material objects play an important role in creating the unity of the Church.³²⁶ Following this line of thought, Insular exegesis provided the Temple veil with the function of

³²⁴ Kessler, “Pictures Fertile with Truth,” 55; idem, *Spiritual Seeing*, 39-47 and 53-58.

³²⁵ On the unfinished painting in the Book of Kells see Tilghman, “Symbolic Use,” 25-70.

³²⁶ Chapter 3 in this dissertation.

constructing the spiritual community. A prolific writer about God's dwelling, Bede equated the features of the Tabernacle with those of Solomon's Temple, asserting that they signify the universal Church, "part of which already reigns with the Lord in heaven, while part is still journeying in this present life away from the Lord".³²⁷ Discussing the textiles of the Tabernacle, Bede noticed that the Temple veil was shaped like the curtain made by Moses for the Tabernacle (2 Chr 3:14)³²⁸ and related the colors of the sacred textiles to the soul of the faithful who removes the veil and recognizes the Lord's resurrection:

Blue, which imitates the color of the sky is aptly compared to the desires of heavenly things. Purple which is made from the blood of shellfish and has even the appearance of blood is justifiably taken as a figure of the mystery of the Lord's passion in which we ought to be initiated and which we ought to imitate by carrying our cross. By scarlet which is of a glowing red shade is expressed the virtue of love, of which the disciples who had walked with the Lord said in wonder, "Was not our heart burning within us while he spoke on the way and opened us to the Scripture?" (Lk 24:32)³²⁹

Bede saw in the colors of the veil the image of Christian desire for heavenly things. His interpretation of the Tabernacle presented the building as a partial realization of the celestial church that begins in the earthly world by means of the spiritual efforts of the faithful. The carpet pages can be interpreted in light of Bede's understanding of the colors of the veil as a spiritual participation of the faithful in the construction of the universal Church. The crosses refer to the earthly church, while simultaneously the ornament mimics metals and glass, the materials that the Book of Revelation envisioned for the Heavenly Jerusalem. The carpet pages clothe the parchment with

³²⁷ Bede, *On the Tabernacle*, 45.

³²⁸ "He also made a veil of violet, purple, scarlet and silk, and embroidered cherubim on it": 2 Chronicles 3:14; see Bede, *On the Temple*, 57.

³²⁹ "Hyacinthus quippe, qui coeli colorem imitatur, supernorum desideriis apte comparatur; purpura quae sanguine conchyliorum conficitur, et sanguineam ipsam profert speciem, non immerito sacramentum Dominicae passionis signat, quo nos initiari, quod imitari crucem nostram portando, debemus. Coccino, qui rubeo colore flammescit, congrue exprimitur virtus amoris, de quo mirantes dixere, qui cum Domino ambulaverunt, discipuli: Nonne cor nostrum ardens erat in nobis, dum loqueretur in via, et aperiret nobis Scripturas (Lk 24)?" Bede, *De Templo*, bk. 2.16:3, *PL* 91, cols. 771B-C; trans. Seán Connolly, pp. 58-59; see also Bede, *On the Tabernacle*, bk. 2.2, pp. 49-50.

the precious media that belong to the church to come. The ornament appears as a work in progress evoking the fact that the fabrication of the celestial church has been begun in the present but is still incomplete. Following Bede's reasoning, this is because the spiritual fabrication is still in progress. The efforts of the faithful in approaching the nature of the Word made flesh fills the veil with colors, but his attempt to fashion the heavenly church cannot be fully accomplished in the present.

The full-page ornament features large interlocked threads and captures the veil in its making by showing the warp and weft that compose the textile (fig. 105). The exegetical tradition on the Gospels expressed especially by Jerome and Augustine employed the act of weaving textile as a metaphor for both the writing of the Gospels and the interpretation of Scripture.³³⁰ Following a practice that also appears in historical accounts, the commentaries on the Gospels presented the act of weaving as a synonym of writing. Jerome's *Plures fuisse*, in the Lindisfarne explains that among those who attempted to write the Gospels only the four Evangelists were weaving the truth about Christ's life:

There have been many who wrote gospels [...] and of others whom it would take too long to list. For the present study it is only necessary to say that certain men have arisen who without the Spirit and without the grace of God "tried to tell a story" (Lk 1:1) rather than to weave historical truth.³³¹

³³⁰ The idea of constructing the narrative by weaving words and sentences has a long exegetical tradition that has roots in the Antique political writings and poetry: see Beat Wagner-Hasel, "*Textus* und *Texere*, *Hýphos* und *Hyphainein*. Zur metaphorischen Bedeutung des Webens in der griechisch-römischen Antike," in "*Textus*" im Mittelalters. *Komponenten und Situationen des Wortgebrauchs im schriftsemantischen Feld*, ed. Ludolf Kuchenbuch and Uta Kleine (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 15-42; Ulrich Ernst, "Text und Intext. Textile Metaphorik und Poetik der Intextualität am Beispiel visueller Dichtungen der Spätantike und des Frühmittelalters," *ibid.*, 43-75.

³³¹ "*Plures fuisse*, qui Evangelia scripserunt [...] ac reliquorum, quos enumerare longissimum est; cum hoc tantum in praesentiarum necesse sit dicere, exstisise quosdam, qui sine spiritu et gratia Dei conati sunt magis ordinare narrationem, quam historiae texere veritatem": Jerome, "Preface," in *Commentarii in Evangelium Matthaei* I:1, ed. David Hurst and Marc Adriaen, *CCSL* 72 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1959), 57; trans. Thomas Scheck, *Commentary on Matthew* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), pp. 51-52; Scheck translated '*texere*' with the English 'construct'. I believe that the verb 'weave' enhances the double meaning of weaving and writing that belongs to the Latin word.

Jerome and Augustine used the trope of weaving to refer to the substantial unity of the Testaments and showed how interweaving threads of verses taken from the Hebrew Bible and the Gospels was a way to understand spiritually the meanings of Holy Writ.³³² *Texere* (weave) and *contexere* (interweave) were verbs used to refer to the act of weaving clothes or textiles.³³³ The similar structure of written text and woven fabrics made the textiles the suitable images to express the concordance and agreement between passages of the Scripture. Augustine's influential work on the harmony of the Gospels reiterates the word "*contexere*" to present the textual concordances in the four narratives of Christ's life.³³⁴ Jerome's commentaries on the prophets employ the same terms that belong to the semantic of weaving in order to explain that the spiritual meanings contained in the Hebrew Bible emerge when the reader knits together letters, words, and biblical passages.³³⁵

Woven Words

The Word made flesh of the Gospels is enlivened in the carpet pages not only by filling interlace with living creatures, but also by pointing to the process of weaving as a metaphor for the viewer reading words.³³⁶ The ornamental pages appropriate the process of weaving that belongs to a poetic tradition known as visual poems (*carmina figurata*).³³⁷ These poems were meant to be read from left to right,

³³² Aubineau, "Tunique Sans Couture," 100-27.

³³³ See for instance Jerome, *In Jeremiam et Ezechielem*, PL 25, col. 714D: "velamina contexant."

³³⁴ Augustine, *De Consensu Evangelistarum*, ed. Franz Weihrich, CSEL 43 (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1963), bks. 2-4.

³³⁵ Jerome found allegorical and tropological senses interweaving biblical passages, see for example Jerome, *Commentariorum in Sophoniam Prophetam*, PL 25, col. 1349C: "tropologiam texere."

³³⁶ The link between ornament and poems in Insular art remain largely unexplored; see John Leyerle, "The Interlace Structure of Beowulf," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 37/1 (1967): 1-17; Clare Lees, "Basil Bunting, *Briggflatts*, Lindisfarne, and Anglo-Saxon Interlace," in *Anglo-Saxon Culture and the Modern Imagination*, ed. David Clark and Nicholas Perkins (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2010), 111-27.

³³⁷ Porphyry's *carmina figurata* are published in *Publilius Optatianus Porphyrii Carmina*, ed. Giovanni Polara (Turin: Paravia, 1973); Jeremy D. Adler and Ulrich Ernst, *Text als Figur. Visuelle Poesie von der*

but also diagonally or vertically, creating interweaving lines that were constructed as the warps and wefts of a virtual textile. Some of the verses in these poems could be organized to create the forms of crosses, circles, or other geometric forms. Painted as fabrics of ornament, the Insular carpet pages visually recall the tradition of these poems by presenting interlace and geometric shapes unified within the same layout. A comparison between the John carpet page (fig. 9) and a ninth-century collection of poems dedicated to the cross composed by Hrabanus Maurus (*Liber Sanctae Crucis*, Rome, Vatican Library, Reg. Lat. 124, fol. 12v, fig. 107), shows that the poetic and the ornamental composition are both fashioned with four quadrangles over a ground of letters and interlace respectively.³³⁸ The tradition of visual poems and the carpet pages both celebrate geometry, displaying crosses and inlays made out of pure geometric forms. The cross-carpet page that precedes Jerome's text is composed of squares. Circles and squares form the crosses for the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, while the John carpet page is composed of rectangular patterns. Although the examples of Hrabanus Maurus' visual poems were made a century later than the Lindisfarne Gospels, the tradition of visual poems was known in the Insular environment at the time when the Lindisfarne Gospels was produced. Bede, for example, wrote in his *De arte metrica* that he had a book of figured poems written by Publilius Optatianus Porphyry, court poet of Constantine.³³⁹ More important, Gospel books contemporary with the Lindisfarne Gospels, and the carpet pages as well, used patterns and designs that belonged to this poetic tradition.

Antike bis zur Moderne, Ausstellungskataloge der Herzog August Bibliothek 56 (Wolfenbüttel: Herzog August Bibliothek; Weinheim: Vertriebs, VCH Verlagsgesellschaft, 1987); Ulrich Ernst, *Carmen Figuratum: Geschichte des Figurengedichts von den antiken Ursprüngen bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1991).

³³⁸ Michele Ferrari, *Il "Liber Sanctae Crucis" di Rabano Mauro: Testo, Immagine, Contesto* (Bern: Lang, 1999).

³³⁹ Bede, *De Arte Metrica et de Schematis et Tropis*, ed. Calvin B. Kendall (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975) CCSL 123A, ch. 24 line 5: "Reperiuntur quaedam et in insigni illo volumine Porphyrii poetae, quo ad Constantinum Augustum misso meruit de exilio liberari."

Carl Nordenfalk pointed out how the eighth-century Stockholm Codex Aureus appropriated some patterns of Porphyry's visual poems.³⁴⁰ Throughout the text of the Gospels some folios show the crosses painted in gold as a frame that runs around the words (fol. 16r, fig. 108). The letters enclosed within the crosses are featured in gold as well, establishing a visual connection between the sign of Christ's victory over death and the words that revealed it. The Codex Aureus displays how the geometrical proportion belonged to the text of the Gospels. There was an intellectual reason for bringing the construction of visual poems into books of the Gospels. The figured poems could demonstrate how geometric shapes were the perfect form of letters and how the eyes could see the order and perfection that resided in the words and structures of the text of the Gospels.

The comparison between the John carpet page (fig. 9) in the Lindisfarne Gospels and a seventh-century visual poem dedicated to the sign of the cross written by the bishop and poet Venantius Fortunatus, reveals how the process of reading the visual poems might have inspired the construction of the ornament.³⁴¹ Venantius Fortunatus organized his letters and verses on the pictorial surface to build a cross, the sign of Christ's passion (St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek cod. 196, fol. 38, fig. 109). The poem contains within the main text independent verses enclosed in lines running diagonally or vertically, thereby creating the shape of a cross.³⁴² The arms of the cross extend to the quadrangular perimeter as if they were reaching the ends of the earth. Green as the tree of life, the cross reinforces by means of shapes and colors the idea

³⁴⁰ Carl Nordenfalk, "Eastern-Style Elements in the Book of Lindisfarne," in *History of Book Illumination*, 86-101.

³⁴¹ Venantius Fortunatus, "De Signaculo Sanctae Crucis," in *Carmina Miscellanea*, 2:4, PL 88, cols. 92A-94A.

³⁴² The verses that construct the cross are: "Crux pia, devotas Agnen tege cum Radegunde. Tu Fortunatam fragilem, crux sancta, tuere. Vera spes nobis ligno, agni sanguine, clavo. Arbor suavis agri, tecum nova vita paratur." The rectangular frame writes: "Dulce decus signi, via caeli, vita redempti. In cruce mors Cristi curavit mortua mundi." See Gregor Emmenegger, *Patristisches Lesebuch: Christliche Texte aus dem 4. bis 6. Jahrhundert* (Norderstedt: Books on Demand, 2011) 424-26.

of victory over death, which is the subject of the poem. Celebrating the harmony of geometric proportion, the illuminator of the carpet pages constructed the ornament in a fashion similar to the visual poems. He painted interweaving threads as a ground, as if they were woven words, and joined them to the pure shapes of crosses, rectangles, and circles.

The Augsburg Gospels makes use of both a visual poem (Augsburg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. I.2.4.2, fol. 2r, fig. 110) and, at various points in its pages, a carpet page (fol. 167v, fig. 111) to give visual form to the act of interweaving words as a process for interpreting the Word of the Gospels.³⁴³ Probably made in the eighth century, the Augsburg Gospels reproduces the layout of one of Porphyry's poems to make explicit how the viewers' eyes could have interpreted pure shapes within a carpet of words, thereby revealing higher meanings.³⁴⁴ A series of letters creates the shape of a square filled with the Latin words "*Evangelia veritati*," meaning the truth of the Gospels. These letters are repeated over and over to fill the quadrangle. To read the words, eyes have to look for the letters by following lines of text in different directions, thus creating virtual lines and shapes. The composition makes visible the mechanism of interweaving letters to create pure forms. It implies that the truth of the Gospels can be seen by searching for the diagrams, the structures, at the foundation of their words. The unifying layout uses colored and black letters to create concentric

³⁴³ This manuscript was originally in the library at Schloss Harburg with the shelfmark Cod. I.2.4.2. For a discussion of the illuminations see Stephen M. Wagner, "Establishing a Connection to Illuminated Manuscripts Made at Echternach in the Eighth and Eleventh Century and Issues of Patronage, Monastic Reform and Splendor," *Peregrinations* 3/1 (2010): 49-82, at 55; the localization of the codex is uncertain. The scholarly debate addresses the question whether the manuscript is Irish or Northumbrian, see Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, "Is the Augsburg Gospel Codex a Northumbrian Manuscript?" in *St. Cuthbert, His Cult*, 189-201.

³⁴⁴ Elizabeth Sears, "Louis the Pious as *Miles Christi*: The Dedicatory Image in Hrabanus Maurus's *De Laudibus Sanctae Crucis*," in: *Charlemagne's Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814-840)*, ed. Peter Godman and Roger Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 605-28; idem, "Word and Image in Carolingian *Carmina Figurata*," in *World Art: Themes of Unity and Diversity. Acts of the XXVI International Congress of the History of Art*, ed. Irving Lavin (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), 2:341-45.

lozenges with a cross at the center. The resulting design is the *tetragonus mundus*, one of the most significant diagrams in the Middle Ages.³⁴⁵ It appears, for example, in a ninth-century manuscript representing a square world (Bede, *De Natura Rerum*, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Ms. 387, folio 134r, fig. 112). This schema is common in later iconographies of the *Maiestas Domini*, commenting on the harmony of the Gospels by adding the idea of stability that belongs to the number four.³⁴⁶ Four winds, four elements, four humors, and four letters in Adam's name, all can be discerned in the diagram. The lozenge works as a bridge between God and man, implying that the earthly world shares part of the rationality and order of heaven.³⁴⁷ Geometric *schemata* point to multilayered meanings by means of their abstract and synthetic forms.

If we look at the carpet page in the Augsburg Gospels in light of the visual poem contained in the same manuscript, the ornamental page seems to engage the same process of revealing the geometric cross as a result of the act of weaving.³⁴⁸ In the carpet page, the interlace decorates the cross, recalling the ways the beholder reads the poem and mentally joins together the letters that inscribe the truth of the Gospels. The ornament points to a process of researching the deepest meanings that reside in *schemata* because they reveal the proportion and the structure of the texts

³⁴⁵ On the lozenge and the fourfold division of the world, see Anna C. Esmeijer, *Divina Quaternitas. A Preliminary Study in the Method and Application of Visual Exegesis* (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum Assen, 1978). See also: Harry Bober, "In Principio. Creation before Time," in *De Artibus Opuscula XL: Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky*, ed. Millard Meiss (New York: New York University Press, 1961), vol. 1, pp. 13-28 at pp. 18-24; Kessler, *Illustrated Bibles*, 51-3; Suzanne Lewis, "Sacred Calligraphy: The Chi Rho Page in the Book of Kells," *Traditio* 36 (1980): 139-59; Elbern, "Bildstruktur–Sinnzeichen–Bildaussage," 17-37; Caviness, "Images of Divine Order," 107-11; Tilghman, "Shape of the Word," 292.

³⁴⁶ Kessler, *Illustrated Bibles*, 51-3; Anne-Orange Poilpré, *Maiestas Domini: Une Image de l'Eglise en Occident, V^e–IX^e Siècle* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2005).

³⁴⁷ On the function of *schemata* as means of the invisible, see Kühnel, *The End of Time*; idem, "Carolingian Diagrams, Images of the Invisible," in *Seeing the Invisible*, 359-390; John North, "Diagram and Thought in Medieval Science," in *Villard's Legacy*, 265-287; Esmeijer, *Divina Quaternitas*; stylization emphasizes the viewer's imaginative engagement with art, see John Onians, "Abstraction and Imagination," 1-24.

³⁴⁸ Ulrich Ernst, "Text und Intext," 43-75.

embedded in Christian writings. The intellectual and exegetical reasons why the carpet page shares the mechanism of reading with the tradition of *carmina figurata* can be found in Cassiodorus' theories of learning. Following Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose, and Hilary, Cassiodorus maintained that the Scriptures were filled with tropes and *schemata* used by grammarians.³⁴⁹ This was the main reason for the Fathers of the Church's interpreting the Word of God with the help of the secular literature. In Cassiodorus' words:

Father Augustine in the third book of *De Doctrina Christiana* maintained the following: "The learned must realise that our authors have employed the modes of all the forms of expression which grammarians using the Greek term call tropes." And a little later: "Those who know these tropes or modes of expression recognise them in sacred literature, and by knowledge of them are assisted to some extent towards understanding of it." This point he makes very clearly in other books as well; for in the volumes which he calls *De Modis Locutionum* he showed that the various *schemata* belonging to secular literature are found in sacred books.³⁵⁰

The carpet pages in the Lindisfarne Gospels recall the structure of visual poems even more clearly than the carpet page in the Augsburg Gospels because in parallel with *carmina figurata*, they show geometric *schemata* that emerge out of a surface of mimicked textiles.

The carpet pages share with *carmina figurata* the visual construction and, more in general, the language of weaving.³⁵¹ In a fashion similar to that of the visual

³⁴⁹ Cassiodorus, "De Eloquentia Totius Legis Divinae," in *In Psalterium Praefatio*, ch. 15, PL 70, col. 21A: "Dixerunt hoc apud nos et alii doctissimi Patres, id est Hieronymus, Ambrosius, Hilarius; ut nequaquam praesumptores hujus rei, sed pedisequi esse videamur."

³⁵⁰ "Nam et Pater Augustinus in libro tertio de Doctrina Christiana ita professus est: "Sciant autem litterati modis omnium locutionum, quos grammatici Graeco nomine tropos vocant, auctores nostros usos fuisse." Et paulo post sequitur: "Quos tamen tropos, id est modos locutionum, qui noverunt agnoscunt in litteris sanctis, eorumque scientia ad eas intelligendas aliquantulum adjuvantur." Cuius rei et in aliis codicibus suis fecit evidentissimam mentionem. In libris quippe quos appellavit de *Modis Locutionum* diversa schemata saecularium litterarum inveniri probavit in litteris sacris": Cassiodorus, "De Eloquentia Totius Legis Divinae," in *In Psalterium Praefatio*, ch. 15, PL 70, cols. 20D-21A, trans. as "The Eloquence of the Entire Divine Law," in *Explanations of the Psalms*, vol. 1, pp. 37-38.

³⁵¹ On the study of Insular texts with word-weaving structures, see Budny, "Deciphering the Art of Interlace," 197; Leyerle, "The Interlaced Structure," 1-17; Peter R. Schroeder, "Stylistic Analogies between Old English Art and Poetry," *Viator* 5 (1974), 184-98.

poems, the carpet pages use images of textiles to formulate theories regarding the soul approaching knowledge. Porphyry, in the opening of his collection of figured poems, use the expression “*Versus intexti*,” which can be translated as “woven verses” or “interwoven lines”.³⁵² He referred to the letters in the poem that compose verses by drawing geometric shapes.³⁵³ Visual poems, designed as a unity of verses and shapes, are conceived of as pieces of fabric. Venantius Fortunatus, for example, envisioned the act of writing visual poems in terms of weaving threads of words and used the same metaphor to emphasize the eyes’ ability to perceive poems as well as paintings.³⁵⁴ He described written and pictorial compositions as elements of a unique woven canvas:

“Poets and painters have always had equal power to venture on whatever they choose” (Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 9-10). Thinking over this line, I asked myself, “If either artist can mix up whatever he wishes, why should not both things be mixed together, even if not by an artist, so that poetry and painting would be woven at the same time and in a single fabric?”³⁵⁵

Venantius Fortunatus commented on the Horatian “*Ut pictura poesis*” (poetry is as painting) in a letter addressed to Syagrius, bishop of Autun, and described how the project of the visual poem that accompanied the letter was conceived and carried out. The language Venantius used to describe the creative process proffers a vivid image of the activity of sewing a piece of textile made out of words. The woven verses

³⁵² Porphyry, “Carmen IX,” 5: “Reddat ut intextus Musarum carmine versus”; Margaret R. Graver, “*Quaelibet Audendi*: Fortunatus and the Acrostic,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 123 (1993): 219-45, at 219 translates *versus intexti* as “interwoven lines”; on the origin of the expression *versus intextus* see Ernst, “Text und Intext,” 50-52.

³⁵³ Porphyry, “Carmen III,” 28f.: “Mentis opus mirum metris intexere carmen / ad varios cursus...”

³⁵⁴ On the reference to the pictorial arts in Venantius’s poems, see Meinolf Vielberg, “*Extensa Viatica*? Zur poetischen Selbstreflexion des Venantius Fortunatus,” *Revue d’Études Augustiniennes et Patristiques* 51 (2005): 153-86.

³⁵⁵ “‘Pictoribus, atque poetis, quaelibet audendi semper fuit aequa potestas,’ considerans versiculum, si quae vult artifex, permiscet uterque, cur et si non ab artifice misceantur utraque, ut ordiretur una tela simul poesis et pictura?”: Venantius Fortunatus, “Ad Syagrium Episcopum Augustidunensem,” in *Miscellanea*, ch. 6, PL 88, col. 193A; trans. in Graver, “*Quaelibet Audendi*,” 239; see also Wesley Trimpf, “The Meaning of Horace’s *Ut Pictura Poesis*,” *The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 36 (1973): 1-34.

become strands (*licia, fila*) in a complex piece of weaving (*orditura, exordio*):

But any letter which is tinted in a descending verse is both contained in the one and runs crosswise with the other: it both stands upright, so to speak, as the warp, and runs crosswise as the weft—so far as may be on the page, a literary looming.³⁵⁶

The reader has to continue the act of weaving by following the letters in different directions.

Weaving is an image used for explaining how the mind processes knowledge from material things to abstract ideas. Focusing on the very process of interpreting signs, from letters to geometric forms, the ornamental pages promote the art of weaving as a process of knowledge. Porphyry and Boethius, for example, explained that interweaving the thread of reason, the soul attempts to approach the knowledge of God.³⁵⁷ A famous image featured by Boethius in his *Consolation of Philosophy* personified philosophy as a woman who:

had woven her clothing with her own hands. [...] On the border of her cloth was embroidered the symbol Π, on that above was to be read a Θ. And between the two letters there could be marked degrees, by which, as by the rungs of a ladder, ascent might be made from the lower principle to the higher.³⁵⁸

The two letters, Π and Θ, referred to the initials of the Practical and Theoretical philosophies. In poetic fashion, Boethius used textile imagery to render an approach toward the knowledge of the intelligible by means of verbal (*trivium*) and

³⁵⁶ “Littera vero quae tingitur in descendenti versiculo, et tenetur in uno, et currit in altero, et ut ita dicatur, et stat pro stamine, et pro trama currit in tramite, ut esse possit in pagina, licia litterata.” Venantius Fortunatus, “Ad Syagrium,” *PL* 88, col. 195A, trans. Graver, “*Quaelibet Audendi*,” 241.

³⁵⁷ Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosophiae. Opuscula Theologica*, ed. Claudio Moreschini (Munich; Lipsia: K.G. Saur, 2000), 1:1; idem, *In Porphyrii Isagogen Commentorum Editio Secunda*, ed. Samuel Brandt, *CSEL* 48 (Vienna and Leipzig: F. Temsky, 1906), pp. 3-347: Boethius describes the ways in which his own arguments follow threads of reasoning.

³⁵⁸ “Vestes erant tenuissimis filis subtili artificio indissolubili materia perfectae, quas, uti post eadem prodente cognovi, suis manibus ipsa texuerat; quarum speciem, veluti fumosas imagines solet, caligo quaedam neglectae vetustatis obduxerat. Harum in extremo margine Π graecum, in supremo vero Θ legebatur intextum atque in utrasque litteras in scalarum modum gradus quidam insigniti videbantur, quibus ab inferiore ad superius elementum esset ascensus.” Boethius, *Consolatio Philosophiae*, 1:1,3-1.1,4.

mathematical arts (*quadrivium*). In such a context, geometry, interpreted as the perfection of the word, represented the highest level of knowledge.³⁵⁹

The carpet pages interpret the structure of the visual poems, replacing letters with lines and colors and celebrating the role of materials by filling the geometric inlays with paint that mimics enamels. Throughout the ornament, imitation enamel inlays are reserved for pure shapes, giving to material images the highest rank in the process of approaching knowledge of God. Greek philosophers theorized the divine in terms of numbers. The divinity was called the One by Plato, and a long tradition of his followers, including Boethius and Cassiodorus, explained the process of approaching his knowledge by means of mathematical tools.³⁶⁰

The tradition of the liberal arts recognized in geometry the highest possibilities of approaching the order that resides in the creation.³⁶¹ Augustine, in agreement with Platonic theory, believed that the elaboration of ideas in the mind took the shape of a geometric process, where the mind's eye proceeds toward pure shapes of ideas by abstracting the unformed matter the soul receives from the senses:

³⁵⁹ On the role of geometry in the process of knowledge, see Michael Evans, "The Geometry of the Mind," *Architectural Association Quarterly* 12/4 (1980): 32-55; Friedrich Ohly, *Geometria e Memoria. Lettera e Allegoria nel Medioevo*, ed. Lea Ritter Santini (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1985); David C. Lindberg, *The Beginnings of Western Science: The European Scientific Tradition in Philosophical, Religious and Institutional Context, 600 B.C. to A.D. 1450* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 82; Andreas Gormans, "Geometria et Ars Memorativa. Studien zur Bedeutung von Kreis und Quadrat als Bestandteile mittelalterlicher Mnemonik und ihrer Wirkungsgeschichte an ausgewählten Beispielen," (Ph.D. diss., RWTH Aachen University, 1999), 105-127; on the influence of Plato in the Isles, see Anna Baldwin and Sarah Hutton, *Platonism and the English Imagination* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 19-64.

³⁶⁰ See Boethius, *De Institutione Arithmetica*, bk. 1, ch. 1: "... [It] is the *quadrivium* by which we bring a superior mind from knowledge offered by the senses to the more certain things of the intellect. There are various steps and certain dimensions of progressing by which the mind is able to ascend so that by means of the eye of the mind, which, as Plato says (*Republic*, 527D), is composed of many corporeal eyes and is of higher dignity than they, truth can be investigated and beheld. This eye, I say, submerged and surrounded by the corporeal senses, is in turn illuminated by the disciplines of the *quadrivium*"; trans. Michael Masi, *Boethian Number Theory*, p. 73; see also Boethius, *Consolatio Philosophiae*, bk. 2, poem 8, trans. Richard Green, p. 41.

³⁶¹ Vincent F. Hopper. *Medieval Number Symbolism: Its Sources, Meaning, and Influence on Thought and Expression* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938); Christopher Butler, *Number Symbolism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 1-44; Joel Kalvesmaki, *The Theology of Arithmetic: Number Symbolism in Platonism and Early Christianity* (Washington: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2013).

From here on the [reason] advanced to the power of eyes, and while contemplating the earth and the sky, it felt that it liked only the beauty; and in the beauty, the forms; in the forms, the measures; in the measures, the numbers. And it scrutinized in itself whether there existed such a line or roundness, such a form or figure that corresponded to what the reason contained in itself. In what the eyes saw it found nothing comparable to what the intellect itself conceived. And these distinct and orderly [forms] it transmitted to a discipline, which it called geometry.³⁶²

The understanding of numbers was formulated as a paradox.³⁶³ The return to the pure intellect could not be fulfilled entirely; human reason could see only the shadow of the truth. The illuminator painted the carpet pages celebrating shapes, colors, and materials because the power of art was a means to approach the divinity. The attempt to grasp the invisible, however, was destined to fail. Human reason cannot gain access to God's image in the present.

The carpet pages, like the veil of the New Testament, were meant to engage with several paradoxes. Christians envisioned Christ's body as a curtain that presents his human nature while hiding his divinity behind it. The ornament illuminates the paradoxes of Christ's nature; the design of the crosses blurs the hierarchical relationship of layers and creates a deliberate uncertainty about what is revealed and what is not.³⁶⁴ On the Jerome carpet page, the interlace seem to create a background for a gemmed cross (fig. 5); while, in the ornament opening the Gospel of Mark (fig. 7), such interweaving lines could have at least a double function. The ornament might

³⁶² "Hinc profecta est in oculorum opes et terrum caelumque conlustrans sensit nihil aliud quam pulchritudinens ibi placere et in pulchritudine figuras, in figuris dimensiones, in dimensionibus numeros quaesivitque ipsa secum, utrum ibi talis linea talisque rotunditas vel quaelibet alia forma et figura esset, qualem intelligentia contineret. Longe deteriore invenit et nulla ex parte, quod viderent oculi, cum eo, quod mens cerneret, comparandum. Haec quoque distincta et disposita in disciplinam redegit appellavitque geometricam": Augustine, *De Ordine*, 2.15.42, ed. William M. Green, *CCSL* 29 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1970), p. 130, trans. in Evgeny A. Zaitsev, "The Meaning of Early Medieval Geometry," *Isis* 90/3 (1999): 522-53 at 530; self-knowledge is the focus of the *De Ordine*. This knowledge consists of knowing one's ability to know and enables one to catch a glimpse not only of the unity of the whole but of God Himself, see Michael Patrick Foley, "The *De Ordine* of St. Augustine" (Ph.D. diss., Boston College, 1999).

³⁶³ See, for example, Boethius, *De Institutione Arithmetica*; Boethius teaches that one of the goals in the study of geometry is the impossible return to the number One, that is the divinity.

³⁶⁴ Chapter 3 in this dissertation.

be seen as the background for the geometric inlays but also, inverting positive and negative space, the interweaving lines depict the shape of a cross. The layout of the carpet pages alludes to the possibilities of seeing and not seeing at the same time. In a similar fashion colors allude to an ambiguity of seeing by mimicking transparent or reflective materials such as glass and metals on parchment. Through a process of simultaneous veiling and unveiling, the carpet pages engage the soul's unfulfilled desire to see the image of God. The ornament compares pictorial arts to the intellectual desire of the soul to see the divinity, revealing the nature of the arts as visible means for the invisible.

Weaving Images

The viewer's gaze penetrates the image, as the eye meanders through the design of the ornament.³⁶⁵ The interpretation of the carpet pages as rugs, curtains, or veils provides a visual expression for the sensorial experience of the viewer who wanders through lines and shapes of the mimicked textiles. The beholder becomes part of the structure of the fabric and plays with its forms, she or he follows rinceaux of animals and interlace, or connects the geometric forms of the design to reveal the crosses the interlace are hiding. At that stage of perception, it no longer matters whether the cross in the Matthew page is evoking the tree of life or the Eucharistic meaning of the chalices. The carpet pages visualize the mind's process of learning in which the beholder engages while looking at the book. Hamburger has explored the medieval pictorial tradition in which the body and the book exist in "a reciprocal relationship to one another," especially in the context of the iconic script.³⁶⁶ The

³⁶⁵ Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament*, especially in his discussions of textiles, p. 215.

³⁶⁶ Hamburger, *Script as Image*, 8-10, at 10; see also Horst Wenzel, "Boten und Briefe: Zum Verhältnis körperlicher und nichtkörperlicher Nachtrichtenträger," in *Gespräche – Boten – Briefe*, ed. Horst Wenzel et al. (Berlin: Eric Schimdt, 1997), 86-105; Jeffrey Hamburger, "Body vs. Book: The Trope of

ornament of the Lindisfarne Gospels plays an important role in this tradition. Exposing the painting as living writing, the carpet pages reveal the ways the letters come to life in the mind of the beholder, thus establishing a link between the beholder's body and the codex. The interlace weaves like the thoughts in the beholder's mind, while their ambiguous layouts draw the viewer deep into the ornament and visually render the soul's desire to see the nature of the Word.³⁶⁷ Imitation textiles and enamels bring the material objects closer to the beholder, stimulating the mind to provide an interpretation of the Word when it appears in pictorial forms.

In the New Testament, veils and textiles have the function of revealing to Christians the meanings of the text of the Gospels (2 Cor 14–16). The mimicked textiles in the carpet pages unveil the Gospels and show that Christ's incarnation provides the Scripture with a physical, material appearance. The transformation of letters into images reappears in the inscriptions in the Evangelist portraits, suggesting the ways in which the painting enriches the meanings of the letters. The portrait of John, the Evangelist who had written of the Word made flesh, renders the inscription "*O agios Iohannes*" with large yellow bands on a red background, showing the pictorial character of the letters (fig. 113). The script receives an iconic charge and simultaneously provides an invitation to vision and to reading. The inscription writes the name of the Evangelist featuring some letters as geometric forms: lozenges compose the letters "O" and two adjoining triangles construct the letters "S". Isidore of Seville as well as Bede explained that the possibility of seeing geometric forms in

Visibility in Images of Christian-Jewish Polemic," in *Ästhetik des Unsichtbaren*, 112-45; Kessler, "Book as Icon," 82-103.; Eric Palazzo, "Le 'Livre-Corps' à l'Époque Carolingienne et Son Rôle dans la Liturgie de la Messe et sa Théologie," *Quaestiones Medii Aevi Novae* 15 (2010): 31-63; Kumler, *Translating Truth*.

³⁶⁷ Bonne, "Formes et Fonctions," 207-49; Hamburger, *Script as Image*, 8.

letters was a way to grasp their original meaning.³⁶⁸ Isidore's renowned collection of etymologies was the expression of a common hermeneutical exercise of penetrating the original meaning of words and even individual letters.³⁶⁹ As it is visible in the inscription of the Evangelist, the iconic features of the words enrich the meanings of the text because of the pictorial effect that the beholder needs to read and decipher. Mary Carruthers has pointed out that in the case of the designed letters there are relationships between the designs and the sense of the words that the beholder has to discover.³⁷⁰ The ornamental letters entail the material and artistic presence of the letters, activating the mnemonic function of the ornament.

Constantly in flux between script and material images, between the mimicked enameled inlays and the pure signs of the geometric shape, the carpet pages enhance the material and fluid nature of the ornament. The complex nature of the ornamental pages might reflect the medieval understanding of words and images as material signs that require the beholder's participation for reading them.³⁷¹ The geometric construction of the carpet pages finds clear comparison in the circles and squares that give shapes to the Evangelist portraits along with the geometric forms that feature certain letters. The illuminator of the Lindisfarne Gospels used geometric forms to construct the decoration and the text throughout the codex, thus providing letters and images with mechanisms of reading are similar to one another, in which the beholder finds pure signs behind both words and figures.

³⁶⁸ See Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmorum*, ed. Marcus Adraen CCSL 97/98; Jerome, *Hebraicorum Nomunim*, ed. Paul De Lagarde CCSL 72, pp. 59-161; Bede, *De Arte Metrica et de Schematis et Tropis*, ed. Calvin Kendall CCSL 123A, pp. 60-171; see Chapter 2 in this dissertation.

³⁶⁹ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, ed. Wallace Lindsay, 1:3, lines 27-30; trans. Stephen A. Barney.

³⁷⁰ Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*.

³⁷¹ The reading of images has opened anthropological approaches that emphasize the power of images, Belting, *Likeness and Presence*; and David Freedberg, *The Power of Images. Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1989); see also Camille, "Reading and Seeing: Some Visual Implications of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy," *Art History* 8 (1985): 26-49; Rudolf Schenda, "Bilder vom Lesen—Lesen von Bildern," *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 12 (1987): 82-106.

The geometric layout of the carpet pages reveals the ways in which *schemata* are embedded in the Word of the Gospels, reflecting Cassiodorus's theories of learning.³⁷² Cassiodorus believed that the reader's intellectual participation was important to gaining access to the meaning of the Scripture. In the *Institutiones* he required students to master all the disciplines of the liberal arts along with the religious literature and the respective exegetical apparatus.³⁷³ Cassiodorus stressed the importance of seeing the mathematical structure of the words, explaining that the material signs could access higher meanings than sounds. He implicitly ranked ornament at the highest level of the hermeneutical hierarchy, because of its power to reveal the organization and design of the words. Discussing the institution of the discipline of grammar, and in agreement with the tradition of liberal arts, Cassiodorus defined *schemata* as "a process of transformation of words or thoughts for the sake of ornament."³⁷⁴ The carpet pages make visible the transformation of words into images, directly referring to the ways *schemata* appear in the visual poems as figures of words. Thus, the ornament likens the ways of reading letters to the interpretation, or reading, of images.

The biting animals of the carpet pages evoke the devotional practices of monastic *lectio*, by which the text of the Gospels was something to be ingested and ruminated upon.³⁷⁵ The carpet pages enhance the role of material images in the process of digestion of the word. Peter Brown and Guglielmo Cavallo among others pointed out that the late sixth century "crushed the image into functions performed by

³⁷² It is reasonable to turn to Cassiodorus' system of education because the Matthew portrait evokes the features of Ezra/Cassiodorus in the Codex Amiatinus, providing evidence of the presence of Cassiodorus in the Lindisfarne Gospels. See Chapters 1 and 2 in this dissertation.

³⁷³ Cassiodorus, *Institutiones*.

³⁷⁴ "Schemata sunt transformationes sermonum vel sententiarum, ornatus causa positae": Cassiodorus, *De Artibus*, bk. 2, ch. 1, PL 70, col. 1153C, trans. Leslie W. Jones, p. 147.

³⁷⁵ Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire of God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, trans. Catharine Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982).

texts and books.”³⁷⁶ The sixth century also produced pictorial arts that unified letters and painting to a point that they cannot be disentangled. The tradition of *carmina figurata* had a revival at this time with Venantius Fortunatus’ poems and his letter to Syagrius containing a clear statement of the equality of painting and writing. Reading of letters and images was brought to a similar level not necessarily to make images or letters accessible to the beholders. The complex compositions of the visual poems makes it clear that the reception of their intricate layouts and texts required an highly educated audience. Moving beyond mere speculation about the people who looked at the poems, it is more interesting to consider the ways in which the visual poems create a totalizing language that sews together letters and images and allows the beholder to perceive the transformation of the text into image.

The eighth-century illuminator of the Lindisfarne Gospels was probably interested in this metamorphic process that the visual poems can activate. The carpet pages point to the poetic tradition in its act of weaving words and replace the letters with mimicked materials. Enamels and textiles constitute the subject of representation, celebrating the role of the senses in the process of chewing and meditating on the Word in its material reality. The transformation of words into imitation materials calls for the participation of the beholder’s senses, alluding to the objects that the people in the Northumbrian community had seen and touched

³⁷⁶ In the seventh century, Pope Gregory the Great compared *lectio* to pictures and explained that images can have a pedagogic function because the illiterates, or the Jews as Brown suggested, can find in them what they cannot read in texts. Pope Gregory’s goal was to limit the phenomenon of adoration of images that was spreading in the sixth-century Gaul. As Peter Brown and Herbert L. Kessler have shown, Pope Gregory’s *dictum* implied that the act of reading, the intellectual exercise guided by the mind as the eyes scanned the pictures discerning the spiritual relevance of the pictures was to replace the act of bowing associated with the adoration of images, see Peter Brown, “Images as a Substitute for Writing,” in *East and West: Modes of Communication. Proceedings for the First Pleanry Congerence at Merida*, ed. Evangelos Chrysos and Ian Wood (Leiden; Boston; Cologne: Brill, 1999), 15-34; Guglielmo Cavallo, “Testo e Immagine: Una Frontiera Ambigua,” in *Testo e Immagine nell’Alto Medioevo. Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo* 41 (Spoleto: Centro di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo, 1994), 31-64, at 45.

elsewhere. The illuminator exalted the enamels' shiny appearance and the variety of colors in the threads of the fictive textiles and celebrated pieces of craftsmanship made by human hands. However, the ornament makes the sensual perception of material images more complex because it requires the eyes to appreciate mimicked objects that the hands would touch but cannot physically reach.³⁷⁷ Praising enameled crosses and precious materials for the ways they stimulate the senses, the carpet pages display fictive enamels that cannot be grasped even with a full participation of the senses. Imitation materials evoke a world apart governed by a geometric economy, bringing to earth a glimpse of heaven.

It is the sensory pleasure of seeing, composing, and recomposing that dominates. And it does so because the ornament transforms material things into a visual language that needs to be deciphered. Pictorial arts, as texts, are equally distant from an invisible, utterly immaterial God. The carpet pages bring the mimicked works of art closer to the beholder, while simultaneously showing how struggle and uncertainty derive from the polysemy of the images. Mimicked materials require a heightened degree of engagement on the part of the viewer, providing an ambiguous sensorial experience that defines the nature of the ornament as transformative and, therefore, as an act in progress.

³⁷⁷ Mary Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Conclusion

The Ornament as a Process

I pointed out in the Introduction that this study has taken as its focus a work that has already received much attention in several important publications. The main reason for this additional piece of writing on the Lindisfarne Gospels is the fact that scholars have looked at the writing, ornament, and the Evangelist portraits as discrete subjects of study, thus separating the ornament from the figures and the text contained in the rest of the codex. With the goal of presenting the pictorial embellishment of the Lindisfarne Gospels with clarity, scholars have unraveled the fusion of languages, detaching the discussion of the painting from the analysis of the script. This approach has problematic consequences on the status of the ornament, because, in this context, the full-page ornament seems to function as a support of the following text, as if it were in a position of mediation, or introduction to the writing. I have tried to show that the ornamental pages provide keys for interpreting and readdressing the status of the figurative and written languages used elsewhere in the codex. The carpet pages augment the material appearance of scripts and figures, while the ornament itself appears as living writing when the beholder interprets the carpet pages in light of the facing display scripts. The imitation enamels in the ornamental pages prompt the viewer to see that the same enamel-like paint materializes some of the letters that appear in the facing display script. The same enameled inlays in the carpet pages highlight the material aspect of the Evangelist portraits, making them appear as if they were made of glass. This unity of script and painting highlights the metamorphic nature of the carpet pages not only in the transformative quality of the ornament

within the frame, but also in the ways the ornamental pages encourage the beholder to read the rest of the manuscript.

Focused on the decoration of a Gospel book, this study draws attention to the fact that the idea of painting as living writing implies that pictorial arts bring the Word to life.³⁷⁸ In the last twenty years scholars have observed that the parchment and pigments that construct the codex embody the Word in its material reality.³⁷⁹ This dissertation has explored the ways in which the carpet pages make visible the effect of the ornament on the viewer's body. The ornamental pages evoke the visual constructions and processes of reading that belong to the tradition of *carmina figurata*. The ornament takes the layout of the visual poem into its composition showing a fluid construction that blurs the positive and negative spaces and exposes visual paradoxes in which mimicked enamels seem to emerge from the background and disappear behind it. The changeable design of the ornament challenges the beholder's perception, and makes it necessary to consider a methodological approach that takes into account the visual ambiguities of the geometric layout along with the symbolic meanings of the image.

Ernst Gombrich and Oleg Grabar, taking a psychological and an anthropological perspective respectively, both argued that the nature of the ornament consists of creating pictorial relationships within the works of art, and eventually between the object and the beholder.³⁸⁰ Focusing more specifically on the Insular carpet pages, Jean-Claude Bonne pointed out that the ornament exists in tension

³⁷⁸ Robert Massin, *La Lettre et l'Image: la Figuration dans l'Alphabet Latin du VIII^e Siècle à Nos Jours*. Paris: Gallimard, 1993; Kendrick, *Animating the Letter*; Kessler, "Book as Icon," 77-103; idem, "Word Made Flesh," 141-68; Hahn, "Letter and Spirit," 55-76; Hamburger, *Script as Image*.

³⁷⁹ Wenzel, "Boten und Briefe," 86-105; Kessler, "The Book as Icon," 77-103; Hamburger, "Body vs. Book," 112-45; Palazzo, "Livre-Corps," 31-63.

³⁸⁰ Grabar, *Mediation of Ornament*; Gombrich, *Sense of Order*.

between the figurative and the geometric abstraction.³⁸¹ He shifted the focus from the work of art to the beholder's perception of the ornament and showed that the ambiguous layout of the carpet pages activates mental processes by which the viewer discerns crosses by unfastening the interlace of the design (fig. 91). Bonne's compelling reading of the fluid construction of the carpet pages opens up questions about the reasons why the visual ambiguities appear in the ornament of early medieval Insular art especially in Gospel books. Jean-Claude Bonne, Emmanuelle Pirotte, and Robert Stevenson among others employed theoretical instruments promoted by the so-called new Vienna school along with the reflections on the languages offered by the field of semiotics.³⁸² The design principle, a leading concept in Otto Pächt's pictorial analysis that brings the viewer to the understanding of the hidden logic that governs the structure of a picture, inspired the reading of the ornament among French scholars. Thus, scholars have mainly applied modern theories to the interpretation of the visual ambiguities that appear in the early medieval carpet pages. In this dissertation I have further explored the critical problem of the metamorphic, ambiguous, and eventually obscure language of the ornament within the context of the material culture contemporary to the Lindisfarne Gospels.

The visual tensions and paradoxes discernible in the carpet pages appear in the context of Insular art. Benjamin Tilghman pointed out that the Anglo-Saxon works were conceived as enigmatic objects, able to face the beholder with the wonder of

³⁸¹ Bonne, "De l'Ornemental," 207-49; idem, "Relève de l'Ornementation," 1011-53; see also Stevenson, "Aspects of Ambiguity," 1-27; Pirotte, "Le Signe de la Croix," 23-45; idem, "Hidden Order," 203-207.

³⁸² Jean-Claude Bonne, "Histoire et Théorie de l'Art Médiéval. Le Modèle d'Otto Pächt," in *Y Voir Mieux, y Regarder de Plus Près. Autour d'Hubert Damisch*, ed. Danièle Cohn (Paris: Éditions rue d'Ulm, 2003), 29-62, 233-36, 266-69; see Otto Pächt, *Methodisches zur Kunsthistorischen Praxis*, ed. Jorg Oberhaidacher et al. (Munich: Prestel, 1977), trans. as *The Practice of Art History: Reflections on Method*, trans. David Britt (New York: Harvey Miller, 1999); *The Vienna School Reader: Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s*, ed. Christopher S. Wood (New York: Zone Books, 2000); Meyer Schapiro, "On Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Art: Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs," *Semiotica* I, 3 (1969): 223-42.

creation, while stressing the fact that the human knowledge remains distant from the mysteries that the works of art evoke.³⁸³ The carpet pages not only expose the ways pictorial arts trick the mind with ambiguous constructions, but they also present the ornament as an act, as a process that began with the making of the manuscript and continues up to the present in the beholder's perception. Thus, I have shown that the metamorphic quality of the carpet pages suggests an interpretation of the ornament not much as a static image, as it has been mainly understood up to now, but rather as a picture in motion that allows the beholder to appreciate the changing nature of the ornamental pages. The interlace turn into bodies of animals, the material inlays shift between the pictorial surface and the background. These visual effects activate several interpretations of the painting, providing the beholder with multilayered meanings. The puzzling layout prompts the beholder's desire of knowledge, exposing the viewer with changeable interpretations of the ornament. In line with a process that Herbert L. Kessler and Karl F. Morrison have explored discussing Carolingian works, the carpet pages activate the beholder's mind and effect on her or his body.³⁸⁴

Imitation enamels and textiles enhance the material qualities and functions of the pictorial arts eliciting a twofold response in the beholder: the material objects are brought closer in contact with the viewer, while they appear as if they were pushed far away from the beholder because they belong to a distant, perfect world regulated by a geometric economy. I have shown in this dissertation that this striking sensorial experience was planned in the original design. The fictive enameled inlays intensify the bright and colorful surface of the objects that inspired the design, thus celebrating and enhancing the material qualities of the metalwork that the Northumbrian

³⁸³ Tilghman, "On the Enigmatic Nature," 1-43.

³⁸⁴ Morrison, "Know Thyself," 369-480; Kessler, "A Sanctifying Serpent," 161-85.

community had seen and touched in the real world. The mechanism of mimicking the works of art in painting shifts the sensorial engagement from the use of the senses of touch and sight to an experience that exalts the use of the eyes. This synaesthetic perception is created by painting three-dimensional enamels that look like they should be touched, but cannot be reached with the hands. In a similar fashion, the changing positive and negative spaces present the material inserts as something that is physically present, but it is not easy to grasp.

Ornamental Language as an Act

Oleg Grabar defined ornament as a mediator and praised beautiful shapes that delight the beholder inspiring pleasure and love for the work of art. His reading of ornament relied on a constant dialogue between the viewer and the artifact, a relationship that changes both man and object. As he explained it using Plato's words, the feeling of love inspired by the decoration is "neither the lover nor the beloved," because "love is of an intermediate nature."³⁸⁵ Mainly focused on Islamic art, his book *The Mediation of the Ornament* also took on some examples of Insular art. Grabar argued that the ornament in the *chi rho* page of the Book of Kells, for example, makes the script sensually attractive and turns the letters into pieces of painting not strictly linked to the text that follows.³⁸⁶ Although Grabar's treatment of the Insular adorned letters was brief, some of his suggestions, I believe, are relevant for the ways the ornament might function in Insular manuscripts. In his intriguing argument about the ornament as a source of pleasure, Grabar responded to Jacques

³⁸⁵ Grabar, *Mediation of Ornament*, 44-45; Plato, *Symposium* (London: Penguin Books, 1951), trans. Walter Hamilton, 79-95.

³⁸⁶ Grabar, *Mediation of Ornament*, 50-53.

Derrida, among others.³⁸⁷ In his fundamental text on grammatology, Derrida focused on the hermeneutical role of writing as material sign. Derrida discussed the relationship between the sign and the signifier and argued that writing is not simply the signifier of something signified, the expression of an object or of a thought. It is, in fact, twice removed from its subject matter, as the word, spoken or recalled, comes between the object and its written form. As Derrida puts it, writing is the signifier of the signifier. Grabar replied to the theory explaining that in the case of the beautiful writing the distance between the sign and its idea is reduced because the pictorial letters refer to several meanings.³⁸⁸

The carpet pages seem to respond to both the arguments Grabar's appealing interpretation of the beauty of writing, which leaves open the reference to meanings and Derrida's distance of the written word from the ideas behind it. It is the essence of Holy Writ to recognize to the thing (*res*) to have an actual meaning after the literal sense is exhausted.³⁸⁹ Medieval Christian philology is concerned with what Ohly calls the "things significations".³⁹⁰ The expression refers to the ways the incarnate Word generates a twofold meaning, one from the word to the thing and a higher one, which points from the thing to something higher.³⁹¹ We have seen how the ornament of the carpet pages evokes the liberal arts for how they unify the *trivium*, the study of the essence of the words, along with *quadrivium*, the science that reveals the properties of

³⁸⁷ Jacques Derrida, *De la Grammatologie* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1967); see discussion in Grabar, *Mediation of Ornament*, 61-62, 113.

³⁸⁸ Grabar interpreted the perception of iconic letters as a game in which there are definite sets of rules but the outcome is unpredictable, see *Mediation of Ornament*, 62.

³⁸⁹ See Henri-Irénée Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la Fin de la Culture Antique* (Paris, De Boccard, 1938).

³⁹⁰ The Word of God is superior to worldly wisdom because not only the word, but also the things (those meant by the word) bear meanings see Ohly, *Sensus Spiritualis*, 1-30, at 4-5. Ohly cited the principle formulated by Richard of St. Victor, *Excerptiones* II, 3, *De Scripturae Divinae Triplici Modo Tractandi*, PL 177, col. 205B: "non solum voces, sed et res significativae sunt" [not only words, but things too are significative].

³⁹¹ Ohly, *Sensus Spiritualis*, 5.

the things as bearers of meanings.³⁹² The ornament refers to the liberal arts as mechanisms of interpretation of the Word in which the mind proceeds from the material thing to the sign. In a fashion that is similar to the ways medieval philology understood the incarnate Word, the carpet pages celebrate the ways the mimicked enamels evoke the Word in its physical presence, while they also emphasize the fact that the meanings they refer to belong to another world, the distant Heavenly Jerusalem made of glass and gold.

The ornamental pages in the Lindisfarne Gospels make the interpretation of the Word a living experience, an action, and as such, it is an intellectual experience not completely controlled by definite rules, but puzzling and uncertain.³⁹³ The beholder experiences complementary sensory effects. He is pleased and attracted by the complexity of the composition, while the visual ambiguities of the layers analyzed in chapter 3 make the beholder consider repeatedly how to understand the construction of the pages. This sensorial response to the ornament joins a sense of appeal along with the intellectual distance that comes from the impossibility of defining the meaning and even the changing subject of the ornament.

Derrida's theory of the intellectual distance from the written sign probably finds some reflection in the Insular ornament. Grabar rejected his theories because he was interested in the artistic aspect of writing, praising the ornament's charm, its ability to appeal the eyes, and bring the viewer in contact with the object itself. I believe that Derrida's thesis of the gap between the written sign and its meaning cannot be disregarded completely. The synthetic language of both the portraits and the ornament in the Lindisfarne Gospels brings the beholder to participate to the

³⁹² Ibid., 6-7; Chapter 4 in this dissertation.

³⁹³ On the language as action and process see Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. Gertrude E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1958).

construction of the meaning of the images, while he is also taken away from the work of art because of the overcharge of senses. In the Matthew page a voice calls the beholder, inviting him to listen to an undistinguished voice that is implied in the Latin inscription “listen!” (“*heus*”) (fig. 1).³⁹⁴ A face appears from the curtain looking straight outside the pictorial space, where the beholder is probably standing, although his sight is directed toward the left, not looking directly to the viewer. Painting and letters invite the beholder to approach the book. But the voice does not continue to speak, as the letters are surrounded by an empty space; not even the face is willing to reveal his identity, as we have seen, since his facial features are not clearly recognizable. The Gospel book invites contemplation and intellectual reflections, but no success of understanding is promised even to the most attentive and scrupulous beholder. In a similar fashion, the carpet pages work not much as a mediator, an instrument of introduction, or a method to access the ineffable divinity, but as a veil that forces the beholder to reconsider the meaning of the ornament itself each time he looks at it.

³⁹⁴ Chapter 1 in this dissertation.

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Abbreviations

- CCCM *Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis*. Turnhout: Brepols, 1966-.
- CCSL *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*. Turnhout: 1953-.
- CSEL *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*. Vienna: Gerold, 1866-1974.
- GCS *Die Griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte*. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1897-1969.
- PL *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina*. Edited by Jacques-Paul Migne. Paris: Garnier, 1844-1903.

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Curriculum Vitae
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Born: June 17, 1981, in Treviglio (BG), Italy

Education:

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| Ph.D. 2015 | History of Art, The Johns Hopkins University
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| M.A. 2010 | History of Art, The Johns Hopkins University |
| M.A. 2008 | Scuola di Specializzazione in Storia dell'Arte,
Università Cattolica di Milano (magna cum laude)
Thesis: "Milano 1922-38. Il Caso delle Chiese Demolite" |
| B.A. 2004 | Discipline delle Arti della Musica e dello Spettacolo,
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Thesis: "L'Iconografia del Cosmo nei Commentari all'Apocalisse di Beato di Liébana." |

Professional Experience:

Teaching:

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| January 7-27, 2012 | Instructor, Johns Hopkins Intersession Program in
Florence: <i>Italian Renaissance Art & Culture</i> |
| January 4-23, 2010 | Instructor, Johns Hopkins Intersession Program in
Florence: <i>Florence and Beyond</i> |
| 2009-2012 | Teaching and Research Assistant, The Johns Hopkins
University |
| 2003-2004 | Intern, Milan, Town Hall, Department of Monuments
and Historical Buildings |

Museum:

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| 2013-2015 | Zanvyl Krieger Curatorial Fellow, Department of
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Summer-Fall 2014	Exhibition: "Seeing Music in Medieval Manuscripts" The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore MD, reviewed by Tim Smith, "Visualizing Music Through Medieval, Renaissance Works at the Walters Art Museum." <i>The Baltimore Sun</i> , July 4, 2014, p. 4; Menachem Wecker, "When Music is Heavenly and Hellish: Walters Exhibit Explores the Role of Music in Religious and Secular Life." <i>Arlington Catholic Herald</i> , July 17-30, 2014, p. 6; Judith Krummeck, "Seeing Music in Medieval Manuscripts," <i>Monologging</i> , July 11, 2014, accessed: November 17, 2014
Spring-Summer 2012	Singleton Graduate Fellowship for Research in Europe
Summer 2010	Curatorial Hall Fellowship, The Walters Art Museum, Manuscripts and Rare Books
Summer 2009	Curatorial Hall Fellowship, The Walters Art Museum, Medieval Art

Publications

Online catalogue entries for the website www.thedigitalwalters.org

Entry for the reliquary attributed to Tommaso da Modena in: *Treasures of Heaven. Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe*. Edited by Martina Bagnoli, Holger Klein, Griffith Mann, and James Robinson. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name, shown at the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, and the British Museum, London, p. 203.

Public Lectures and Conference Papers

October 4, 2014	Special tour of the exhibition "Seeing Music in Medieval Manuscripts" for the International Center of Medieval Art
May 11, 2014	49 th International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo MI Presider and co-organizer with Rachel Danford: Session: "Material Metamorphoses"
May, 2013	The Walters Art Museum Fellow Series, Baltimore Paper: "Enlivening the Thread of the Veil in Insular Carpet Pages"
April 6, 2013	Medieval Academy of America Annual Meeting, Knoxville

Valle

Paper: "*Solus Ornatus Est Qui Discernit Indoctos*:
Liberal Arts in the Lindisfarne Gospels' Ornamental
Pages"

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44th Middle Atlantic Symposium, National Gallery,
Washington

Paper: "Weaving the Invisible: Painting Carpets as
Paradox"

Affiliations

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Figures